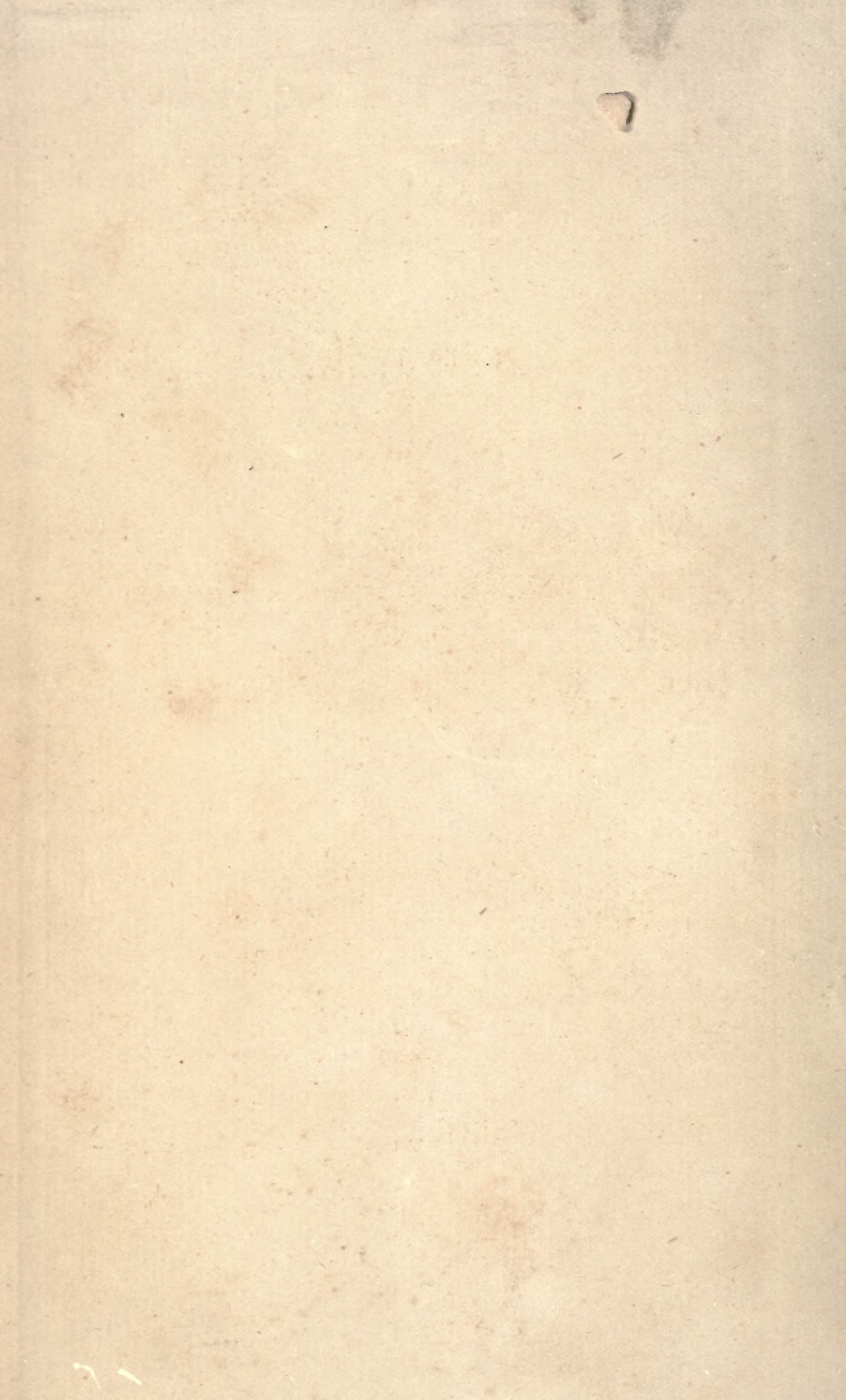
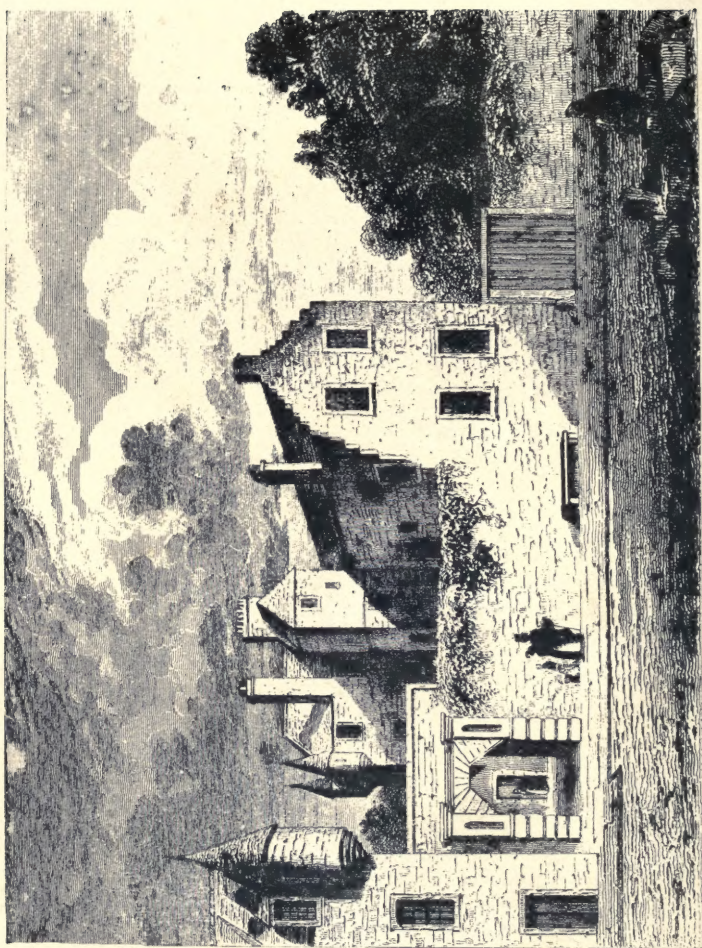


THE
GOWRIE CONSPIRACY



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GOWRIE HOUSE, FRONTING THE TAY.

THE
GOWRIE CONSPIRACY

AND ITS OFFICIAL NARRATIVE

BY
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'MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS' AND 'WHO WROTE THE CASKET LETTERS'

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PREFACE.

THAT singular event, the Gowrie Conspiracy, is one that appeals with more than common interest to all readers of history, as the obscurity in which it is involved gives it quite a romantic place in the annals of the 17th century. I have endeavoured in the following pages to throw some additional light on the subject derived from a careful research in the State Paper offices and in other collections. The papers in the possession of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society have, I believe, been privately published, but this is the first time that some of them have really been put within reach of the public. I consider these papers of importance, not so much from the position and standing of the

writers, as from the special opportunities they had of giving an independent opinion on a subject they had studied with profound interest. I am not prepared to question the conclusions at which they have arrived, for I think these, when the whole case has been put under review and every available document scrutinised, are well founded. There are some curious things connected with this event. For example, we are met at the threshold by the absolute want of a Ruthven narrative and the consequent difficulty of estimating the value of that published by the King. On this hangs the whole question. The execution of the plot showed that it was deliberately planned, although all trace of negotiations has been withheld and absolutely nothing disclosed. That Gowrie conspired against the King and was the head of the conspiracy the official narrative tries to make clear; but it is not well put together. It is rather a clumsy piece of composition, and its special pleading condemns it. Take for example the scene in

the turret chamber. Does any one suppose that if Gowrie wanted to assassinate the King, Alexander Ruthven would have engaged in the silly conversation that is recorded in the official narrative? If the plot had been of Gowrie's making, if Gowrie had, as many suppose, been the conspirator, Alexander Ruthven would doubtless have taken his life when he had so favourable an opportunity for doing so. And what is conspicuous is that neither Gowrie nor his brother ever attempted to take the King's life. Ruthven was evidently dragged to the turret window by James, and this cunning device conveyed the impression outside that James was in great danger. (James at this period would be thirty-four years of age, Ruthven a youth of twenty.) This was the signal for the massacre which afterwards took place; and the manner in which it was carried out certainly indicated that it was malice aforethought. There is also to be considered the attitude of the Corporation of Perth of that

day. The magistrates were onlookers, and it is evident they had no knowledge whatever until Gowrie was killed that any conspiracy was going on. Had Gowrie led the conspiracy, his brother magistrates would doubtless have known something about it. So far from that being the case, the Town Council and the inhabitants rose up in indignation against the King, and were furious at the death of Gowrie, who was their Provost. The King's efforts to appease them by becoming a burgess in April following was a highly suspicious act, and his effusive charters granted to the town after the event are too transparent to mislead any one. The subsequent conduct of the King and his nobles throws great suspicion on them. The depositions they took, which were painfully voluminous, were untruthful, one-sided, and conspicuous by their want of independence. They are a mere re-echo of the official narrative. These tribunals, in short, were not impartial, and some shady circumstances are reported to have

occurred, such as the murder of a messenger, who could have given important evidence, whose body was found next day in a corn-field. Why did the King's party murder this man, who witnessed the conspiracy, if it was not because his evidence would condemn the King? Assuming Gowrie to have been the conspirator, was the King, with the knowledge he possessed, having slain his enemies and confiscated their estates, justified in resorting to the cruel and inhuman procedure which he subsequently adopted against the Ruthven family? His object in all this is undoubtedly a great mystery, and seems to convey the impression that he believed Gowrie was a competitor for the English throne.

The correspondence of Nicolson, Elizabeth's envoy in Scotland, is important, and should be carefully studied. So far as we are aware he was a man of strict integrity. He does not take the King's part, and he was an independent witness and a looker-on. In coming to the conclusion I have done, I have

been guided by the evidence I have reproduced, and there is no other evidence of any value to be obtained on which one would be justified in forming a conclusion. That evidence appears to me to leave no room for doubt as to who was the author of the so-called Gowrie Conspiracy.

S. C.

PERTH,
November, 1902.

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THE GOWRIE CONSPIRACY

CHAPTER I.

Condition of Scotland in 1600—The Ruthven Family
—The Earl of Gowrie's return from Padua—The
King's narrative of the Conspiracy.

SCOTLAND during the middle ages was anything but a peaceful kingdom, and its people were anything but law-abiding. Its administration was not characterised by integrity, but rather by corruption, immorality, and crime. Allegiance to the throne was disregarded in high quarters when any great scheme was afloat, and the effect of this was destructive of loyalty and of the general safety, and calculated to keep the people in constant excitement. Conspiracies during this period were very common, and the lives of the lieges were

never absolutely free from danger. The conspiracy of Robert Graham and the Earl of Atholl against the life of James I. was an inexcusable and treacherous act, in which the lives of all three were sacrificed. The conspiracies against Riccio and against Darnley were equally inexcusable, and attended with much greater loss of life ; while the conspiracy against the Queen of Scots was carried on for nineteen years, and culminated not only in her execution, but in a wholesale execution of a large number of the nobility and people. In the reign of James VI. the conspiracy against him by William Lord Ruthven and his followers lasted for upwards of ten months, and some years afterwards what is known as the Gowrie Conspiracy followed suit. These do not exhaust the list, but they unfold the spirit of the times. These plots had one object only, and that was the aggrandisement of the men by whom they were put forward. The condition of Scotland was pitiable. It was financially in a state of chronic bank-

ruptcy, and the English monarch its chief creditor. It was constantly engaged in civil war ; its military were undisciplined, ill-clad, ill-fed, ill-paid, while its people were poor and discontented. This state of matters occasioned the loss of Flodden, Pinkie, Solway Moss, and several other engagements. The general poverty and insecurity were shown in some of the sieges of Perth, the ancient capital, when on one occasion only one man in the burgh was able to give hospitality, and on another occasion, when the provost and magistrates forsook the town and ran away to escape danger. With one exception these cabals we have referred to were directed against royal personages, a state of matters that disclosed a spirit of rebellion and treason amongst the leading men of the time, and particularly those who were ministers of State. Everything unfortunately has not been recorded, and we can only criticise what is expressed in the official narrative. The treasonable conduct of the nobles, which figures conspicuously in the

historical record, is difficult to believe, but it seems to be beyond doubt; and not only so, but there is reason to believe that all of them entered into and promoted these unlawful schemes without the least hesitation. For example, when James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, undertook to murder Darnley if the nobles gave him as a *douceur* Darnley's wife, nineteen out of twenty nobles convened signed the bond. The Gowrie Conspiracy was different from every other conspiracy that has occurred either before or since, in respect that it was evidently a plot by a royal personage against a subject; it differed also from the conspiracies we have named in that it was conceived without ingenuity and executed without skill. Ruthven at Falkland, the drama at the dinner, the King's uncovered head at the window, the false report that he had returned to Falkland, the death-scene in the turret chamber, the prompt execution of those who could give evidence against the King, and the farce of the bogus depositions, leave

no reasonable doubt as to the elaborate scheme which must have been "cut and dry," constructed and rehearsed, before the fatal 5th of August. To most students of history it will appear mysterious why the negotiations for the deed were kept so quiet; so quiet in short that nothing about them has found its way into the State Paper Office or into any private collection. Although Gowrie and his brothers were annihilated and his estates confiscated, he had seven married sisters who were evidently undisturbed. One of these was married to Lennox, who does not appear to have taken Gowrie's part, but we should have expected some of the other brothers-in-law to have spoken out. From whatever reason history is silent. Even that noble woman, Dorothea Stuart, Gowrie's mother, who in agony witnessed her two youngest boys being pursued and hunted to the death by the bloodhounds of James, was consequently unable to communicate with them or to afford them food, clothing, or shelter, and has left nothing on

record to enlighten the seeker after truth. Scotsmen in every age have read this wonderful story; children at school have been "grounded" on the King's narrative; while students of history have stood aghast as they engaged in research and gradually realised that they were unravelling the mystery of a gigantic plot.

Whether it was a conspiracy by Gowrie to remove the King, or a conspiracy by the King to remove Gowrie, has always been a debatable question. The Ruthven family were extensive landowners in Scotland, and were also identified very closely with the town of Perth, while by marriage they were connected with various county families. Their country residence was Ruthven Castle, in the neighbourhood of Perth; their town residence Gowrie House, and the head of the family was usually Sheriff and Provost of Perth. There does not seem to have been any crime recorded against any of the family until the reign of Queen Mary, when Patrick Lord

Ruthven, who died in exile, joined the rebels, became a violent conspirator, and was one of the murderers of Riccio. He committed the unpardonable offence of striking Riccio with his sword in the presence of the Queen, and otherwise of grossly insulting her Majesty, as is fully recorded in the Queen's biography. For this she indignantly told him, after the murder, that she hoped "the Eternal God, who from the high heavens beheld this murder, would avenge her injury by rooting out him and his treacherous posterity." The Gowrie Conspiracy evidently fulfilled this prophecy. His son succeeded as William Lord Ruthven, and was afterwards created first Earl of Gowrie. He also became a rebel, and evidently was a man of the most brutal description, in proof of which we have recorded his outrage on the Queen at Lochleven, when, in company with Lindsay, he forced himself into her bedroom, found her ill and in bed, and compelled her to sign her abdication by brute force. The Queen had no greater

enemy. He was also one of the Darnley murderers; and during the reign of James he concocted and carried out what is called the Raid of Ruthven, for which he was afterwards beheaded. His eldest son died while second Earl of Gowrie, and the next two sons were those of the Gowrie Conspiracy. The elder of these, John, third Earl, had just (1600) finished his education at Padua, and was only twenty-one years of age. He went to England on his return from Padua, and spent two months at Elizabeth's Court at a time when it has been suggested that James and Elizabeth had quarrelled. On his arrival in Edinburgh he was surrounded by a brilliant company of noblemen and gentlemen and a vast assembly of friends. The King is reported not to have been very cordial to him, but his genial manner at length prevailed. He was fond of sports, which pleased the King; and it is said he became the constant companion of James, but of this we have not sufficient proof. The narrative of the so-called Gowrie

Conspiracy, which has been frequently published, is the official version issued by the authority of James, and presumably written by him. We do not think it can be accepted as a *bona fide* report of what occurred, nor do we think the depositions afterwards taken before the Town Council and at Falkland are of the slightest value, because they are notoriously one-sided and untruthful. The whole proceedings appear to have been directed by royal authority, and woe to the man who called in question any order of James. This narrative has done its work by manifesting to posterity that the atrocious deed was the act of Gowrie and his brother. No narrative of the conspiracy from the Ruthvens or their friends has, as already stated, ever been published, very probably because no one was left who was in a position to do so. All such were executed after the conspiracy by command of the King.

In the archives of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society are some important papers

on the subject, read before the Society more than a century ago by men who evidently had devoted much time to its consideration, and whose efforts to arrive at the truth cannot be too highly commended. What they have said is of great importance. We give in a slightly condensed form four of these papers, which we commend to the unbiassed judgment of those who desire to form an opinion on this great historical event. We shall first, however, reproduce the King's narrative.

THE NARRATIVE OF JAMES VI.

On the 5th August the King and his nobles were in the great park at Falkland ready to mount and proceed to their sport. This was between 6 and 7 a.m. The King was surrounded by his hounds and huntsmen when Alexander Ruthven came up and craved an audience. Ruthven then declared that the evening before he had met a suspicious looking fellow outside the walls of St. Johns

toun with his face muffled in a cloak, and perceiving him to be terrified when questioned he seized him, and on searching found a pot full of gold pieces under his cloak. This treasure, with the man who carried it, he had secured in a small chamber in Gowrie House, and he now begged the King to ride with him to St. Johnstoun and make sure of it as he had not yet told his brother. The King disclaimed having any right to money they found, but on being told it was foreign gold he proposed to send a warrant to the Provost to seize it. Ruthven protested against his doing so, as if the magistrates got a hold of it he would never see it. All he wanted was that the King would ride with him to St. Johnstoun, see the treasure, and judge for himself. The King said he would decide after the hunt was over. At the close of the chase he surprised his companions by telling them that he meant to ride into Perth and see the Earl of Gowrie, and he immediately rode off with Ruthven at a rapid pace. During the

ride Ruthven despatched Andrew Henderson, his chamberlain, to advise Gowrie that the King would arrive very shortly. Gowrie, it would appear, dined at half-past twelve along with three friends. Shortly after, Ruthven arrived to announce the King's approach, and Gowrie and his friends and followers rose to their feet and walked to the South Inch to meet him. The King had an escort of twelve or fifteen persons. On coming to Gowrie House he called for a drink, and was annoyed at having to wait long for it, and also at the delay of an hour before dinner was served. During this interval Alexander Ruthven sent for the key of the room leading to the gallery chamber, which room adjoined the cabinet where the King dined. At the end of this apartment was another which led by a stair into a circular room formed in the interior of a turret, and this room could be entered not only by the door at the end of the gallery, but by another door communicating with a back stair. Soon after the King sat down to dinner Gowrie

sent for Henderson and told him to go to his brother in the gallery. He obeyed and was joined by Gowrie. Henderson, beginning to get uneasy, asked excitedly what they were about to do with him. Gowrie and his brother proceeded to the little chamber, made him enter and locked him up. Gowrie then returned to the King, who was sitting at his dessert, whilst Lennox and the rest of the suite were dining in the next room. The King in a bantering way proposed Gowrie's health in a flowing bumper of wine. Gowrie, calling for wine, joined Lennox and his companions, and at this moment Alexander Ruthven, when the King was alone, whispered to him that now was the time to go. The King asked him to call Sir Thomas Erskine, but he evaded the question. Lennox spoke of following, but Gowrie prevented him. The latter then opened the door leading to his pleasure-grounds and Lennox and others passed into the garden. The King, believing some of his suite were following

him, accompanied Ruthven up a stair and through a suite of various chambers all of them opening into each other, Ruthven locking every door as they passed out. At last they entered the small room (already mentioned). On the wall hung a picture with a curtain before it; beside it stood a man in armour; and as the King started back in alarm Ruthven locked the door, put on his hat, drew the dagger from the side of the armed man, and tearing the curtain from the picture, showed the well-known features of the late Earl, his father. "Whose face is that?" said he, advancing the dagger with one hand to the King's breast, and pointing with the other to the picture. "Who murdered my father? Is not thy conscience burdened by his innocent blood? Thou art now my prisoner, and must be content to follow our will and to be used as we list. Seek not to escape, utter but a cry" (the King has crossed to the window), "make but a motion to open the window and this dagger is in thy heart."

Said the King: "As for your father's death, I had no hand in it: it was my Council's doing, and should you now take my life what preferment will it bring you? Have I not sons and daughters? You can never be King of Scotland, and I have many good subjects who will avenge my death." Ruthven seemed struck with this, and swore he neither wanted his blood nor his life. Said the King: "What want ye if ye seek not my life?" "But a promise, Sir," was the reply. "What promise?" "Sir," said Ruthven, "my brother will tell you." "Go, fetch him then," said the King, and he assured Ruthven that until his return he would neither call out nor open the window. Ruthven commanded Henderson to watch the King and departed, locking the door behind him. The King being alone with Henderson asked him if Gowrie would do him any mischief, to which Henderson said he would die first. "Open the window then," said the King, and while Henderson was in the act of doing so Ruthven entered the room, and

swearing there was no remedy seized the King by the wrists and attempted to bind him with a garter which he had in his hand. The King was too much for him, and wrenching himself from Ruthven exclaimed he "was a free prince and would never be bound," Henderson at the same time forcing away the cord. The King made for the window, when Ruthven seized him by the throat with one hand and thrust the other into his mouth to prevent him giving alarm. James dragged his assailant to the window and thrust his head half out, though Ruthven's hand was still on his throat, cried out, "Treason! help, Earl of Mar, I am murdered!" Ruthven dragged him back, and denouncing Henderson as a cowardly villain, attempted to draw his sword, which the King prevented by grasping his right hand. Henderson, though Ruthven's servant, supported the King, and unlocking the door of the room stood trembling while the King and Ruthven engaged in a desperate struggle. A report was got up by the Ruthvens that the

King and his suite had left the Castle by a back door and were riding over the South Inch on their return journey. (This was an ingenious device of the writer to entrap the Ruthvens.) In a few minutes the King's cry of treason was heard, and some of the nobles looking up saw the King's face at the turret window with a hand on his throat. Sir Thomas Erskine immediately seized Gowrie, with the words, "Traitor, thou shalt die! this is thy work," but was felled to the ground by Andrew Ruthven. Lennox and Mar rushed up the great staircase to the hall but found the door locked. John Ramsay, one of the King's suite, ran swiftly up the back stair to the top, dashed open the door of the Round Chamber with his foot and found the King and Ruthven still wrestling, the King with Ruthven's hand under his arm, while Ruthven still grasped the King's throat. Ramsay made an ineffectual blow at Ruthven, the King calling out to strike low as he wore a doublet. Ramsay then stabbed him twice on the lower

part of the body. The King thereupon pushed him backwards through the door downstairs, when Sir Thomas Erskine and Dr. Herries despatched him with their swords. As Erskine and Ramsay were congratulating the King a tumult was heard at the end of the gallery. The King was hurried into an adjoining chamber when Gowrie arrived with a rapier in each hand, rushed along the gallery followed by seven of his servants with drawn swords. He had seen the bleeding body of his brother, and swore that the traitors who murdered him should die. He attacked Erskine and three companions, who were all wounded, but they fought with determined energy. Some one called out that the King was slain, and Gowrie, as if paralysed with the news, dropped his weapon, when Ramsay, who noticed this, slew him instantly with his sword. After all was over the King knelt in company with his nobles and thanked God for their deliverance!

CHAPTER II.

First Paper on the Gowrie Conspiracy, read before the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society by the Rev. James Scott—Second Paper by the Rev. Alexander Duff—Third Paper by James Logan—Fourth Paper by William Panton—Plans of the Interior of Gowrie House with Explanatory Notes.

THE official narrative is a very plausible document—so much so that it immediately gave rise to controversy. The Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society, which was founded towards the close of the eighteenth century, gave great encouragement to its members to investigate the nature of this conspiracy. The result was that four papers of considerable importance were, after investigation, prepared and read to the Society in the year 1785. These were as follows :—

First, by Rev. James Scott, minister of Perth.

Second, by Rev. Alexander Duff, minister of Tibbermore.

Third, by James Logan.

Fourth, by William Panton.

FIRST PAPER.

In the seventeenth century it seems to have been the opinion that the Earl was, by the mother's side, grandson of Queen Margaret, James IV.'s relict, and that he was a generation nearer the English Crown than James VI., that lady's great grandson. This opinion is expressed in some barbarous verses which had probably been written about the time of Charles I.'s death. The following may be selected :—

“ Queen Margaret's grandson nigher in degree,
Was Gowrie's ruin and King James's plea.”

Gowrie's mother, Dorothea Stuart, could not have been the Queen's daughter, for her

Majesty died in 1541, aged fifty-three, whereas Dorothea, first and only Countess of Gowrie, had borne children at intervals after 1580. A son whom Margaret bore when dowager, although omitted by all our peerage writers, is expressly mentioned in Lord Methven's patent of creation (1525) as uterine brother of the royal donor James V., and by two credible and nearly contemporary authors, Bishop Lesley and Hume of Godscroft, formerly stated to have been slain at Pinkie in 1547. The "Master of Methven," as these designate him, must have been son of the Queen, because no son of Methven's second lady could have been old enough to appear in arms. Her Majesty's second son, according to the first Viscount Strathallan, had been born in 1515—the following year—and consequently must at his death have been fully thirty. That he was father of the Countess of Gowrie is stated by the Viscount.

James VI. was resolved that the Earl of Gowrie and his brother Alexander should be

put to death in a scuffle seemingly accidental, and in which they were to be made appear the aggressors and aiming at the King's death. His Majesty's personal safety and that of his confidential servants was to be secured by bribing the Earl's domestics and by fetching, as if by chance, a sufficient armed force from the adjacent country. For a visit of his Majesty at Gowrie House a special pretext was to be contrived. His Majesty, after dining there, was to affect a necessity for retiring to a private apartment, and was to take with him one of the devoted brothers. A rumour was soon to be spread that the King had set off for Falkland. When the royal suite should have assembled in the street to follow their master he was to give an alarm that his life was in danger. His confidential servants were to ascend by a private staircase, purposely left accessible, and kill the brother whom his Majesty had selected as the companion of his retirement. They were next to kill the other when he came

around, as it was expected he would, amid a disturbance of whose nature he should be ignorant.

Of all this atrocity a principal reason seems to have been James's antipathy to the opulent and powerful family of Gowrie, the representatives of which, father and son, the first and the present, had, the one after the other, raised rebellions against his Government. The father's conduct had been fatal to himself by procuring his execution in 1584. The son when fifteen only had with others of the nobles waged war upon the Sovereign in 1593; had been defeated at a battle at Doune Castle by his Majesty in person, and had with difficulty escaped from the scene of action, but after some time was pardoned for his youth's sake. He had gone to study at the University of Padua, and returned to Scotland after an absence of about six years, when, among the first of his measures, he headed the opposition to a tax proposed by the Sovereign, and was besides avowedly hostile

to his Majesty's now favourite scheme of restoring the hierarchy. Gowrie's descent too from Queen Margaret, of whom it would seem he was, like James, great grandson, and the possibility of his being selected by Elizabeth, at whose Court, on his return from the Continent, he had received great attention, might help to increase the royal heart-burning.

Whatever were the motives by which the King had been urged to a conduct so nefarious, he had in 1600 by letter commanded Alexander Ruthven to attend him at Falkland on the 5th of August—a day on which Ruthven and his brother the Earl had intended, according to preparations made, to go together from Perth to Dirleton to visit their mother, then residing there, and her two sons. After privately conversing with Ruthven at a hunting party his Majesty suddenly intimated that he was going to Perth. On his way he condescended to state confidentially to some of his train the reason of the sudden expedition, by telling them that he

had been told by Ruthven of a foreign monk then lurking with a pot of gold in Gowrie House, and that he wished to seize and examine him in person. The royal cavalcade had reached the environs of Perth whilst yet Gowrie, its Provost, Sheriff and Coroner, sat at dinner. Instantly his lordship and others hastened to meet their royal master on the South Inch, and having done so escorted him with due honour to Gowrie House, which they reached at one o'clock.

As the Sovereign had been unlooked for till receipt of that notice which had raised Gowrie from table, some time was necessary to prepare dinner for the royal guest; and it was not till an hour had elapsed that it was served up. The stranger with his pot of gold had meanwhile been seemingly forgotten.

His Majesty sat down to dinner attended by Gowrie's brother standing at his back, and by the Earl himself standing at the further end of the table. James was now pleased to rally the Earl on his ignorance of the national

manners. To Gowrie these had probably not been familiar, as he had been nearly six years in a life of three and twenty abroad, and had not returned much above five months. "You ought, Gowrie, to welcome my attendants as well as myself," said the King, with affected frankness. This the Earl, though somewhat embarrassed, now attempted to do by personally waiting upon his brother nobles and others in the adjoining ante-chamber, where by this time dinner had been served. His Majesty, attended by Alexander Ruthven, soon passed them as if going out of doors.

The courtiers having dined went, on a motion by the Duke of Lennox—who by the way had married Gowrie's sister—to enjoy the fresh air in the garden extending from the mansion to the river. They had been there a short while only when they were informed that the King had set off for Falkland.

All made haste to follow as fast as they could. Of the King's departure doubts were entertained, but these were removed by the

information given on inquiry. When they had got nearly ready to mount their steeds, and the bustle had become very great, who should be descried bending over a window, hat off, face inflamed, and mouth pressed by a hand extended from the apartment, but the King himself, loudly bawling, "Fy! fy! Treason! treason! help, Earl of Mar!" Mar, Lennox and others ran up the broad stair at the east end of the picture-gallery, from the closet attached to which his Majesty had called for aid.

The first Earl of Gowrie had laid out a gallery for paintings in the south range of Gowrie House. At the west end a door opened into a chamber called the Gallery Chamber and led to a smaller and more private room called the Earl's study. These two rooms extended over the whole of the turret at the south-west angle and were approached by a private staircase called the black turnpike.

At the further end of the southern range of

Gowrie House, Lord Lennox, Mar, and others of the royal suite, after running up the broad stairs leading to the picture-gallery, attempted to enter to his Majesty's assistance, but could not even by force of hammers. It had been locked. One of the party, however, Sir John Ramsay, page to his Majesty, having previously been acquainted with the private staircase at the end whence the King had called, ascended by it and was soon in the royal presence.

On the street before Gowrie House stood its noble proprietor in his cloak, unarmed, when, by Sir Thomas Erskine, James Erskine, his brother, and George Wilson, servant of the latter, he was suddenly grasped by the neck and thus accosted:—"Traitor, this is thy deed. Thou shalt die." "What is the matter?" said Gowrie. "I know nothing. Oh, my God! what can all this mean?" His friends and servants interposed and released him. A near relative, Alexander Ruthven, younger of Freeland, having no armour, had,

with his fist, knocked Sir Thomas down. Denied access to his own courtyard, and suspecting the great danger he was in, whilst destitute of all means of defence, the Earl ran a short way to Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy's House, and there procured two swords, one of which he had probably intended for his brother, who he knew was unarmed. He thence went to Andrew Henderson, his own chamberlain: in Henderson's absence he got hold of a steel bonnet. This one of his lacqueys tied on his master on the street. Thus armed, and followed by Thomas Cranston, brother of Sir John Cranston of Cranston, and probably Gowrie's secretary, who also had a drawn sword, did the distracted Earl run, exclaiming, "I shall either be at my own house or die by the way." Nor did he meet with any opposition till by the "black turnpike" he had arrived at the door of the gallery chamber where he had to force his way. "Where is the king?" cried Gowrie, entering with a drawn sword in either

hand. "I come to defend him." The company, consisting of Sir Thomas Erskine, Sir John Ramsay, Sir Hugh Herries and Wilson, all of whom had found out the black turnpike, now pointed to the King's cloak covering apparently a dead body. "You have slain the King, our gracious master," they sullenly muttered, "and will you take our lives also?" Astonished, and touching the floor with the points of the two swords—"Ah! wae's me," bitterly exclaimed Gowrie, "has the King been killed in my house?" With a dagger Ramsay pierced him through the back to the very heart. The wounded Earl leaned on one of his swords, but quickly fell and expired.

And whom did the royal cloak conceal? It concealed, not the royal owner, but that unfortunate person whose arm had been seen reaching from the window and ineffectually attempting to repress the false cry of "treason" so vehemently shouted by the King. This was none other than Alexander Ruthven,

Gowrie's brother, who, at the King's request, had unarmed attended him to the retired apartment, and whom, though greatly stronger than his Majesty, Ramsay, on entering the gallery chamber, found, as this very person afterwards confessed, upon his knees, with his head under the King's arm and with his hand trying, as he had already done in vain, to stop the King's mouth. "Fy! strike him low," cried the King to the page, "for he has a plaited doublet." Ramsay struck, not low indeed, but at the head and neck, lowered as these now were by his suppliant attitude. The King with his own hand dragged the bleeding youth to the top of the staircase; and returning to the gallery chamber, amused himself by stopping a hawk, accidentally brought by the page, from flying away. The page, looking from the window of the closet and beckoning to the private staircase, cried to Sir Thomas Erskine to ascend by it. Sir Thomas, followed by Herries and Wilson, ran to the "black turnpike," and ascending a few

steps met Ruthven bleeding. "Fy!" cried Sir Thomas, "this is the traitor! Strike him!" Herries and Wilson mortally stabbed the wounded youth, who, falling on the steps and turning his face to theirs, sobbed forth—"Alas! I have not the blame of it!" He then breathed his last. His body was dragged up the staircase and stretched on the floor of the gallery chamber. His Majesty was now, for safety, locked up in the Earl's study, the apartment adjoining.

Now when this scene of murder had been fully acted did the King, issuing from the closet, kneel upon the floor of the picture-gallery, whilst each noble and knight followed the royal example, and offered a loud and solemn prayer in which, thanking the Almighty for the late miraculous and providential deliverance vouchsafed from the sword of the traitor, he expressed a fervent hope that his life had been thus graciously preserved for perfecting even greater work than had now devolved upon himself and his associates in

the overthrow of assassins, and such as might redound to the glory of God and the good of the realm !

As a strong suspicion existed that instead of Gowrie and his brother conspiring against the King, the King and others had conspired against them, it was his Majesty's care to issue a proclamation explanatory of the late mysterious affair at Perth and to cast all the blame on the deceased. In this proclamation he asserted that a "black grim man in armour" had attended himself and Ruthven in the closet of Gowrie House. Of the Earl's domestics, several had been pitched upon, one after another, as the armed man, but each of these could prove an alibi. A pliant actor was at length found in the Earl's chamberlain, Henderson, from whose house, in his absence at Scone, his master had taken the steel cap, and who had not returned till the affray was over. This man, instead of being "black and grim," was ruddy and had a brown beard. Nay, the King had on one occasion, to a person who

asked if Henderson was the man, declared he was not, adding in his peculiar jargon, "I know that smack well enough." Of the deceased Earl's domestics, Cranston, formerly mentioned, George Craigengelt, who had been sickly and in bed at the commencement of the scuffle, but had sallied forth, sword in hand, in his master's cause, and Donald Macduff, baron officer of Strathbraan, a district belonging to the Gowrie family, were by the King's order examined, and on the 23rd August executed at Perth. According to Archbishop Spottiswood, who had every wish to screen the royal family, these at their death declared "they knew nothing of the Earl's purpose, and had only followed him as their master to that room, where, if they had known the King to have been, they would have stood for him against their master and all others."

Of the reality of Gowrie's treason several of the clergy were incredulous; nor could their illustrious leader, Robert Bruce of Kin-naird, ever be prevailed upon either by promise

or threat to acknowledge his belief. To the King it was of the utmost moment that the ministers should from the pulpits give such a representation of the alleged conspiracy as might relieve his Majesty of the odium under which he was conscious of lying from the general impression that the conspiracy had originated with himself. Such, therefore, of the ministers as did not act in subscribing to the Sovereign's wish had drawn upon themselves his keenest resentment, and Bruce, though of a high family, was banished furth of the kingdom. He sailed to France in November, 1600, but was allowed to return the following May, though, being pertinacious of an opinion invoking the King's infamy, he was never restored to the royal favour. Of the truth or falsehood of the conspiracy Bruce may be supposed to have been a most adequate judge, as he had regularly studied the law, civil as well as canonical, both at home and on the Continent, and had at the Scottish Bar, before going into the

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Church, given promise of first-rate juridical talents.

Gowrie's body and that of his brother, after lying at Perth nearly three months, had on the 30th October been brought to Edinburgh to be produced in Court at their trial, according to the law in cases of high treason. On the 4th November the Parliament nominated the Lords of Articles a Committee for examining witnesses, and on the 15th again met, when the Lord Advocate produced certified copies of the depositions of all the witnesses in the cause from the beginning. Parliament declared their judgment to be that the late Earl of Gowrie and his brother Alexander were convicted of high treason as having attempted the King's death: that their names, memories and dignities be cancelled and deleted from the books of the nobility: that their estates and property be confiscated to the King: that their dead bodies be carried on Monday next to the public Cross of Edinburgh, there to be hanged, drawn, and quar-

tered in presence of all the people: and that their heads, quarters, and carcasses be fixed to the most public places of Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee and Stirling.

Alexander and Henry, sons of the deceased Alexander Ruthven of Freeland, Hugh Moncreiffe and Patrick Eviot, formerly mentioned, were declared traitors and their estates confiscated. The elder of the Ruthvens, Moncreiffe and Eviot, afterwards obtained the royal pardon. The temper of this extraordinary monarch had got wonderfully mollified by his accession to the English throne.

On Monday, 19th November, 1600, the bodies of Gowrie and his brother were hanged and dismembered at the Cross of Edinburgh and their armorial bearings publicly torn to pieces. They had now been dead three months and fourteen days. The heads were fixed on the Tolbooth of Edinburgh and the legs and arms on the gates of Perth. By Act of Parliament all persons of the surname of

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Ruthven were commanded to choose other surnames before Whit Sunday following. Many retained the name notwithstanding this. Ruthven Castle, near Perth, in virtue of this Act became Huntingtower.

James had soon after the alleged treason of Gowrie industriously courted the favour of the town of Perth. On the 15th November, 1600, the very day of the forfeiture of Gowrie and the Ruthvens, he granted to Perth a Charter confirming her privileges and promising new ones. On the 30th December following he passed a decree in favour of Perth against Dundee in a law-suit regarding privilege of the river Tay and precedence of rank : and in the following April condescended to be formally elected burgess and Provost of Perth : partook of a great feast at the burgh's expense and adhibited to the Guild book his signature.

Jacobus Rex.

Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos.

SECOND PAPER.

In the year 1584, during the minority of King James the Sixth, William, the first Earl of Gowrie, was executed at Stirling. After the King had come to the full years of majority, he found the Gowrie family under John, the third Earl, who was a younger son of the said William, possessed of wealth and power beyond the other nobility of the kingdom; and growing apprehensive that this Earl Gowrie might at some time avail himself of this circumstance to revenge the death of his father, it is firmly believed, by those who have had best access to be well informed about this matter, that his Majesty went from Falkland to Perth, with design to destroy Earl Gowrie and his family.

On the 5th August, 1600, King James set off from Falkland for Perth. On the road, he gave the following account of his journey to some of them who accompanied him. That Alexander Ruthven, Earl Gowrie's brother,

had met with him privately that morning, when he was going out to the chase, and told him that the Earl and he had the day before apprehended a foreign monk in the neighbourhood of Perth, with a great quantity of gold coin in an earthen pot, and that they had secured him, on suspicion of his being sent over to employ this money to sow discord, and support the interest of Popery; and he had come to inform his Majesty, that he might go himself and examine the matter. That he (the King) having resolved to delay the affair till they had finished the chase, Alexander Ruthven, who acted with great secrecy, returned to Perth; and his Majesty inquired at those who were with him if Ruthven was altogether solid in his judgment: to which it was answered, that he always behaved himself as a man of prudence and worth.

About dinner-time, word was brought to the Earl, who was attending a marriage between a young man of the name of Lamb,

and a young woman called Bell, the daughter of a respectable citizen of Perth, that the King and a company with him had come to his house; on which Earl Gowrie's countenance changed, and he appeared to be a good deal perplexed; and being asked by the bride's father, in whose house he was, what ailed him, he said he was distressed for a dinner to the King and his retinue, who had come upon him unexpectedly. Mr. Bell urged him to accept of the dinner that was prepared for the wedding, and it is believed he did accept of it. The Earl of Gowrie went to meet the King, and conducted him into his house, where his Majesty dined in a room by himself; and about the end of the dinner the King, looking steadfastly to Earl Gowrie, said he would make free to tell him he had imported some foolish customs from France, to the neglect of some good social customs that pertained to his own country. Earl Gowrie having asked what he meant, "Why don't you shake hands with your guests," said the King, "and bid them

welcome?" The Earl on this took the King by the hand and bade him welcome. "Go now," said his Majesty, "and do the same with the rest of the company." And when Gowrie had gone for this purpose to the King's attendants, who were dining in a different apartment, the King said that Alexander Ruthven suggested to him that now was the proper time to go and examine the monk. They passed through the room where the Court-people were dining, his Majesty saying, "Sit ye, merry gentlemen, and much good may it do you." They then went through three other apartments, the doors of which Ruthven locked behind them, and came at last to the fatal closet, where the tragedy that day was performed. The stories of their finding a man in armour, instead of a monk; of Ruthven making the King to swear that in his absence he would not move nor call out for assistance; of his then going to advise with the Earl his brother, and telling the King on his return

that there was no help, he must die—have been considered at Perth as having no other support but the King's assertion; for the declaration of Andrew Henderson, who—after three other persons (concerning whom the King had said he was certain that one of them was the man in armour) had made it appear that neither of them was that man—affirmed that he was the man in armour shut up with his Majesty in the closet, was looked on as false, and Henderson was held as infamous. It is even affirmed that, after swearing he was the man found in the closet, he never had the courage to look a man in the face, but always had the appearance of a crestfallen dejected creature, whose countenance seemed to confess the justice of that general and great contempt which was cast upon him.

When the King's retinue had dined, one of his servants told them that his Majesty had set off a little before for Falkland; on which they ran to get their horses, and having mounted, when they were near the Port they

heard the King's voice from a window in Earl Gowrie's house, which he had got half opened, crying "Treason! treason!" They immediately returned, and tried to get into the closet from which the voice had come, but the doors were barricaded, and it took some time to break them open with hammers from an adjoining smith's shop, and such other instruments as they could first procure. Earl Gowrie, being alarmed at the uproar, ran up by a private stair to a smaller entrance, accompanied with some servants, and armed with a sword in each hand. He found the King in the closet, and along with him his surgeon, called Herries, his page Ramsay, and his groom Murray, which three men had got into the closet without the knowledge of the other company who had come with the King. Earl Gowrie stuck his swords in the floor, and desired to know the cause of such disturbance. He was answered by Ramsay, that there was a design to kill the King, and immediately he and the other two fell on the Earl and despatched

him, as they had done his brother Alexander Ruthven a little before. At this time those persons who were forcing their way by the principal entry, got to the closet, and the King telling them what danger he had been in, they congratulated him on his deliverance from it.

The news being quickly spread through the town, the inhabitants, and even the magistrates, exasperated beyond measure by the death of their beloved Provost, ran in crowds to Earl Gowrie's house, and threatened to kill the King and all his attendants. Various means were employed to soothe their passions. His Majesty endeavoured to appease their anger, by narrating the great danger he had so narrowly escaped. He tried also to turn it against the deceased Earl and his brother; but after all they could do to allay the fury of the enraged multitude, they found it most advisable to keep themselves within doors till daylight was gone, and then in a dark night they slipped away privately, and returned to Falkland. When the King

mentioned the circumstance of the man in armour who had been with him in the closet, being asked if he knew him, he answered that he was positive about his being one of the three persons whom he named. Two of them being near at hand, gave full proof that neither of them was the man in armour; and his Majesty affirmed that he was clear it was the third person mentioned by him, who was a servant of Gowrie's, called Younger. This man also being able to prove that he could not have been with the King in the closet, having been at Dundee when his master was killed at Perth, he wrote to a friend in Falkland that he would not lie under the imputation, and being on his way to disprove it, he was found next morning in a corn-field with his throat cut.

His Majesty appointed a day of thanksgiving, to be observed throughout the nation, on account of his wonderful deliverance from this dangerous conspiracy. Several clergymen, particularly the ministers of

Edinburgh, refused to observe it; and one of them, very eminent for integrity and spirit, Mr. Robert Bruce, did actually submit to perpetual banishment, rather than dissemble, by saying he was convinced that Gowrie had not conspired against the life of his Sovereign. Murray the groom being sent to expostulate with Mr. Bruce for not obeying the King's edict, he replied, "It would be more for the King's honour to have less to do with such persons as you." Two younger brothers of Earl Gowrie, William and Patrick Ruthven, were at Dirleton when he and Alexander were killed at Perth. When the King got to Falkland he despatched Murray his groom to kill these two young gentlemen, that they might not survive the misfortune of their family, and perhaps be the avengers of it. But one of the King's servants, named Kennedy, who had formerly been servant to Earl Gowrie, and had a regard for that family, getting information of this cruel purpose, stole a horse from the King's stable, arrived before

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the groom, gave intelligence to the unfortunate youths of what had been done to their brothers, and was designed against themselves. They fled, got abroad, and were kindly received and entertained by the famous reformer Theodore Beza, who had been well acquainted with Earl Gowrie, had the highest respect for his character and memory, and never would give credit to the story of his having conspired against the King.* Ramsay, Murray, and Herries received titles and riches in reward for their services on this important occasion.

This, so far as I have been able to procure information, is the most distinct and complete account that has been preserved in the town of Perth concerning that remarkable event, which is generally (though with great injustice, I most sincerely believe) called Gowrie's Conspiracy. When I showed the old castle of Ruthven, in this parish, now

* Only one of the brothers succeeded in getting abroad.

called Huntingtower, once the dwelling-place of the family of Gowrie, to that intelligent and ingenuous traveller, Thomas Pennant, he expressed a desire to have the best account of this matter which tradition had preserved in the place where it happened. After diligent research, the above narrative is the result of my inquiries. In the course of a dozen of years, during which it has been in my custody, the sentiments of mankind on this subject are much changed, and an opinion corresponding with the strain of this tradition, which makes the conspiracy on the King's side, doth greatly gain ground; and this, it appears, was the opinion at Perth, from the day when that melancholy affair was transacted there. The circumstance of three armed men being privately admitted into the closet before the King and Alexander Ruthven came there, removes the principal difficulty which stood in the way of supposing the Sovereign to be the conspirator. His Majesty was in no danger by going into the closet with

Ruthven, who was much stronger than him, when three armed men were previously lodged there to protect him, and assassinate the other so soon as he entered. We cannot well suppose that these armed men got into that closet without the connivance of some of Earl Gowrie's servants, who had been bribed to give them access. In support of this hypothesis, Mr. David Calderwood, who lived at that period, and has left a manuscript History of the Affairs of Scotland, says that Earl Gowrie's porter, and Doggie his waiter, were serving Lord Scone when he wrote of this transaction, shortly after it happened. The places occupied by these servants gave them the best opportunity of admitting persons into their master's house; and Mr. Calderwood, by mentioning them as being soon after Earl Gowrie's death taken into the service of Lord Scone, who was a considerable sharer in the division of Earl Gowrie's property and offices, certainly means to insinuate, that these servants were retained

by their present master in reward for having betrayed their former one. That this same Lord Scone, formerly Sir David Murray, was informed of the King's evil designs against Gowrie's life, appears from a circumstance mentioned by Calderwood. In a Convention of Estates held at Edinburgh, very soon after the Earl's return to his native country, after an absence of almost six years, he strenuously opposed his Majesty's measures about some proposed taxation, upon which Sir David Murray said, "There is an unhappy man; they are but seeking an occasion of his death, and now he has given it." That Dr. Herries, one of the three armed men who were lodged in the closet, was acquainted with the mischief that was meditating against the Gowrie family, is also mentioned by Calderwood. Beatrix, a sister of Earl Gowrie's, and one of the Queen's ladies, laughed at the Doctor's bowed legs; he took her by the hand, considered it after the manner of a fortune-teller, and said,

“Mistress, before long a great disaster will befall you.”

Mr. William Coupar, one of the ministers of Perth at that time, came very soon and very seasonably with a story to support the King’s account of this matter, and great stress was laid upon it then, and since, by persons who have been investigating this subject. Mr. John Spottiswood, at that time parson of Calder, in Mid-Lothian, who was afterwards, in 1615, promoted to be Archbishop of St. Andrews, gives the following account of Mr. Coupar’s story. “I remember,” says he, “that, meeting with William Coupar, then minister at Perth, the third day after it, in Falkland, he shewed me that not many days before that accident (he means the conspiracy) happened, visiting by occasion the Earl at his own house, he found him reading a book, *De Conjurat-ionibus adversus Principes*. Having asked him what book it was, Earl Gowrie answered, It was a collection of the conspiracies against Princes, all of which, he said, were foolishly

contrived, and faulty in one point or other, for he that goeth about such a business, said the Earl, should not put any man on his counsel. Mr. Coupar not liking such discourse, desired him to lay away books of that kind, and read others of a better subject. He then proceeds to give his own opinion of the matter in the following words: 'I verily think he was then studying how to go beyond all conspirators recorded in any history; but it pleased God, who giveth salvation to Princes, to infatuate his counsels, and, by his example, to admonish all disloyal, traitorous subjects to beware of attempting anything against their sovereigns.'” This story was produced very opportunely, and, we may believe, it was most acceptable.

Earl Gowrie's servants were examined, and several of them executed, solemnly declaring that they knew of no conspiracy. His travelling governor, William Rhynd, a most worthy man, was put to the torture twice at least, and in these circumstances declared that he knew of no conspiracy. No person knew

or could bear testimony of any such thing; but Mr. Coupar accounted for all this, by telling that Earl Gowrie had resolved to put no man on his counsel. I shall only observe at present, that though Mr. Coupar's story in a single point of view seems to serve the King's purpose, it is against it on the whole, for there are symptoms of debility, and even suicide, attending, that are more than sufficient to destroy it. The reverend gentleman says: "I verily think that he (meaning Earl Gowrie) was studying to go beyond all conspirators recorded in any history." Do facts support this assertion? The King is brought to Earl Gowrie's house, according to their own account, within an hour of mid-day, attended with a considerable retinue; and there was a plot formed to assassinate him, the very house where he was, and the doors about it, being occupied by his attendants. Has this the aspect of a studied conspiracy? If you look for it from Earl Gowrie, there could not be anything so simple and stupid. If the

King had been killed it must have ruined the Gowrie family ; as his Majesty had publicly gone into the Earl's house, he was accountable for him : the nation would have required him to produce their Sovereign. It must have obviously occurred to Earl Gowrie that the utter extirpation of himself and family would be the unavoidable consequence of the King's being destroyed, or having disappeared in his house. The fate of his own father was a recent and striking example of the danger of meddling with the person of a King. If King James had been killed in a clandestine manner by some unknown person, Mr. Coupar's story might have furnished a thread of direction to travel through a dark labyrinth ; but there is no circumstance in the transaction of that fifth of August, on the part of Earl Gowrie and his brother, from which one could conclude that it was a well-concerted scheme, premeditated by a man of eminent abilities, improved by a most liberal education, for cutting off the King, in a way that should

accomplish the purpose and baffle all discovery. Mr. Coupar seems to have felt this difficulty, and endeavours to remove it by alleging that the providence of God had infatuated Earl Gowrie's counsel. God Almighty doth often defeat the wicked counsels and purposes of men, by making some occurrence to interfere and counteract them; but still their counsels do shew themselves and instruct the ingenious malice of the contrivers; but here it would be necessary to believe that God had deprived Earl Gowrie of his reason, as if he meant to excuse the deed by reducing the agent below the rank of accountable beings.

I now proceed to mention some circumstances which explain to what extent Mr. Coupar knew Earl Gowrie's character, and the nature of that conspiracy, and will also explain the character of Mr. Coupar, and the degree of credit that may be due to his testimony.

He had very little opportunity to form an

acquaintance with the Earl of Gowrie. That nobleman left Perth at the age of seventeen years, in August 1594, to finish his education at a foreign university. He only returned to Scotland in the end of February 1600, arrived at Perth the 20th of May, and was killed there the 5th of August that same year. The Earl had a house in Perth, but the principal dwelling-place of the family was in the parish of Tibbermuir. His estates were extensive through Perthshire, his relations, vassals, and dependents, were very numerous; and after an absence of almost six years, it must occur to every person that much company, and a multitude of objects, would engage his attention; and for the space of ten weeks, which was all the length of time that this unfortunate nobleman was allowed to live after he returned to his native place, it is scarcely possible that any man, who before that period was an utter stranger to him, could procure such frequent and intimate access to his company as would give sufficient opportunity to study his dis-

position and character. Mr. William Coupar was translated from Bothkennar, near Falkirk, to be minister of Perth, in the year 1595, after Earl Gowrie had gone abroad, and therefore could have no acquaintance with him, except in the few weeks he lived after his return to Perth; and a natural inference from this view of the matter is, that the shortness of the time did not allow sufficient space to ponder and bring forward the various particulars which such a transaction must have required.

Mr. William Coupar was absent from Perth on that 5th of August, when Earl Gowrie and his brother were killed. The session-record of Perth, dated August the 4th that year, contains the following entry: "No matters of discipline handled this day, the ministers being at the Synodal Assembly in Stirling." The Synod sat at Stirling that very 5th of August, and the ministers of Perth had gone off the day before to attend it. Mr. Coupar, therefore, being at such a distance, was not a competent witness of what

was then doing at Perth, and his testimony on this account cannot be relied on, as if he had been on the spot, and known the immediate circumstances of the case, and the unbiassed sentiments of mankind on the subject.

Mr. Coupar went from Stirling to Falkland, and published his story before he came back to Perth; and Bishop Spottiswood writes, that William Coupar, leaving Stirling, came to Falkland, where the King was, on Friday, August 8th, and there told of his having found Earl Gowrie reading the Book of Conspiracies, with his own very violent conclusion from this circumstance. Thus he was an ultroneous witness, without being called or suspected. Without taking leisure to examine matters, he rode immediately to the King, and unasked he comes out with his story. It has not the most favourable aspect when a person goes spontaneously as he did to thrust in his evidence; and it looks exceedingly suspicious when he makes conclusions of his own con-

trivance, greatly stronger than he gives any ground to support. If a man, by looking into any book, gives reason to suppose that he is going to adopt all the principles, or execute all the mischief contained in that book, what man who reads can be safe for a moment? Mr. Coupar, it is pretty clear, wished to recommend himself to his Sovereign, and probably even then had his eye towards that preferment which he attained not long after, being made Bishop of Galloway by a grateful Sovereign. He appears to have been a man of a political time-serving turn of mind. This agrees with the character of him by some historians of that time, who give a bad account of him; and to me it is fully instructed by a deed I have seen, wherein he, after he was Bishop of Galloway, concurs with other bishops and temporal Lords in introducing the magistrates of Perth to be managers of the Hospital there, and in alienating and giving away the Hospital funds for the use of the burgh. If some others did this ignorantly,

he certainly did it intentionally. Mr. Calderwood mentions a fact which shows that he had a bad opinion of himself. When on his death-bed, he discovered great agitation of mind by frequently beating on his breast, and calling out, "A fallen star, a fallen star!"

If these observations leave any credibility in Mr. Coupar's story, it must be completely destroyed by the following undoubted circumstance. It appears, by looking into an account of the proof taken at the trial, on which the Earl and his brother were attainted and forfeited after their death, which was published by George, Earl of Cromarty, in 1713, that William Coupar was not cited as a witness in that process; I confess that the discovery of this particular did very much surprise me. To what can it be ascribed? Not to their being ignorant of what he had to say; neither can it be ascribed to a want of concern for gaining credit to their story; the violence used towards the ministers of Edinburgh, who were compelled either to

feign belief or to fly their country, shews an excess of anxiety on this point. The only account that remains of his not being called, is, that he could do them no good. It is easier to tell a story than to swear to the truth of it; and if Mr. Coupar could have verified what he had said, by giving his oath in confirmation, it is not conceivable that his evidence would have been overlooked; by omitting to get his tale authenticated, it is to be considered, in all reason, as totally unfounded; and any credit that might otherwise have been due to it falls to the ground.

The 15th of November of that same year 1600, the King gifted a charter of confirmation to the town of Perth of all their ancient rights and privileges; the date of it is on the very day when sentence of forfeiture was pronounced against Earl Gowrie and his brother; and the whole family was disinherited, declared incapable of enjoying any possession or honour, and the very surname of Ruthven prohibited for ever. This was an exceedingly

severe sentence with respect to the younger brothers, and any branches of the family who were not so much as suspected in the matter, and gives us no very favourable idea of the impartiality and justice of those who pronounced it. When we consider the date of the charter, and the size thereof, it being a small volume, it is necessary to suppose that some time must have been employed in preparing it for the subscription; which will make the operations about it coincide with the time spent about the trial of the alleged conspirators, which was from the 9th to the 15th of the said month of November; and there is reason to suspect that this matter might be made use of to influence the persons who had gone over from Perth to give evidence at the trial, and also to reconcile the people there to the sentence of Parliament when it should be reported; there is much reason to believe that these things were intended by it, when we examine the contents of this charter. Besides the privileges for-

merly enjoyed by the town, there were some new things granted, that must have been highly acceptable. His Majesty then ordered that Perth should afterwards be held prior to Dundee in the roll of burghs, and that the magistrates and commissioners thereof should in time coming have the precedence of any magistrates or commissioners of the same order belonging to Dundee. This point had often been warmly disputed between two jealous burghs, and was at that very time the subject of a keen, expensive, and tedious process. In 1582, the Convention of Royal Burghs met at Perth, and this question about priority and precedence between Perth and Dundee was brought before them, and they decided in favour of Perth. Immediately after, the burgh of Dundee commenced a process before the Lords of Council and Session, alleging that great injustice had been done them by the decision at Perth, which they affirmed had been obtained by the undue influence of William, first Earl of Gowrie, then

Provost of Perth, who had misled the Convention in that matter. His Majesty, during the subsistence of this process, by the new charter gave the point entirely in favour of Perth; but it did not end there, the process went on, and next year the matter by desire was submitted to his Majesty and Privy Council, who gave the priority and precedence for Perth, but endeavoured to soothe the people of Dundee, by retracting some privileges respecting the navigation of the Tay, which had been also granted by the said charter of confirmation to Perth, but were now given to Dundee. Nothing could be a higher gratification to the inhabitants of Perth. It was a stretch of prerogative to think of giving it, and the very submission which afterwards took place, shews that the King was sensible he could not grant it; however, it produced the effect, the Privy Council had too much courtesy to tear up what the King had done; but this straining to favour the one town to the prejudice of the other does ill accord with the hypothesis of

the conspiracy at Perth, if we consider that the inhabitants of Dundee took arms when the report reached them that the King was in danger at Perth, and were advancing rapidly for his rescue. By this charter of confirmation, also, the sum of Eighty Pounds Sterling yearly, at that time paid into the Exchequer for his Majesty's use, was gifted for the following purposes, and in the following proportions, to the town of Perth: Sixty-nine Pounds, Eight Shillings, and Eightpence Sterling, to an hospital which his Majesty had some time before founded there; and the remaining Ten Pounds, Eleven Shillings, and Fourpence, to the bridge; and there is a fact which I believe holds with respect to this whole donation, but I am certain respecting the share thereof which belongs to the hospital, that neither any charter, nor so much as any information, was given to the hospital. The original grant in favour of the poor at Perth, which is called King James's Hospital, was made in 1567, and the

ministers and elders of Perth had from that date got the administration of certain funds belonging to the hospital; but this second grant was kept an entire secret from them, nor did they discover it till the year 1754, one hundred and fifty-four years after it was made. Is it not surprising that King James, when he made so large an addition to the hospital-revenue, being at that time nearly equal to all the other funds, should not have given them a charter for it, or at least instructed them of it in the town's charter, by which they had right to demand it?

If there was a conspiracy at Perth against King James on the day when Earl Gowrie and his brother, Alexander Ruthven, were killed there; if there be any truth in the circumstances mentioned by his Majesty as tending to the execution thereof, it is necessary to suppose that there were several persons in the plot, prepared to support the principal actors; at any rate, it is certain that all orders of people at Perth did on

that occasion shew vast attachment to the Gowrie family, and by their behaviour expressed a decided opinion that the death of Earl Gowrie, their Provost, and his brother, was a cruel murder. Let us try to suppose that the King was conscious of his innocence, and that there had been a real plot to take away his life, was the town where an assassination had been attempted against him immediately after a proper object of favour? Were those very persons, several of whom, it is likely enough, conspired to do this wicked action, and who had certainly insulted and threatened him on this trying occasion, entitled so soon to such extraordinary attention and good offices from him? One would imagine that the dread and the resentment of it would have induced him to keep at a distance from such a place, and to banish all thoughts of it for years to come; but before three months are over after such a wonderful escape, to find him employing uncommon exertions to heap honour and riches on that very city where

such a horrid plot had been contrived, and almost executed against him, doth in my apprehension surpass all bounds of credibility. If we make Earl Gowrie, and others about Perth, the conspirators, his Majesty's conduct is unnatural and absurd ; but if we place the conspiracy to the King's side, all the goodness shown, and all the gifts bestowed, were employed with much wisdom and policy, to soften the sentiments of men, and put to silence their ill-natured conjectures and reflections on this subject. A long and violently contended for preference to a rival burgh must have been extremely flattering ; a donation to the poor is always a popular deed ; if, therefore, the gift to the hospital should come to be known, it would prove an acceptable present to the people ; but if it could be kept secret (and I appeal to the impartial world, if its being kept an impenetrable secret for more than a hundred and fifty years does not give reason to believe that there was a settled scheme of covering it with perpetual obscurity),

in this way, that donation, which was nominally to the hospital, was actually to the township, to the people of power in the place, and was meant as a bribe to make them have favourable thoughts, or at least keep silence about his Majesty's conduct in the matter of Earl Gowrie and his brother's death.

I have one other fact to mention, which concurs with the foregoing, in giving ground to believe that King James took no little pains, at this particular period, to conciliate the affections of the citizens of Perth, and to procure popularity among them. A manuscript chronicle, preserved in the town, called Mercer's Manuscript, of very good credit, contains the following particulars: "April the 15th, 1601. The King's Majesty came to Perth, and was made burgess at the market-cross, subscribed the Guild-book with his own hand, *Jacobus Rex—Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos*. There were eight puncheons of wine set down at the cross, and all drunken out. He received the banquet of the town."

The same story of there having been a vast banquet and riot at Perth on that day, when his Majesty and courtiers, together with the magistrates and chief people of the place, were entertained at the expense of the town, is instructed by other vouchers; particularly, by the manuscript chronicle of one Patrick Dundee; and the record of his Majesty having then been made burgess with his own subscription, as mentioned above, is still extant at Perth; and a descriptive poem of that burgh, lately published,* bears, that the King was then made Provost of that town. To no other burgh did his Majesty show so much respect; and this favour was crowded, within a smaller space than the compass of one year after Earl Gowrie's death. Perth was then a most darling object; but it does not appear that this partiality was continued to Perth, after gifts and feasting had quieted the tongues, and reconciled the minds of this honoured town to their then liberal and

* The Muses Threnodie.

festive monarch. These circumstances in his Majesty's conduct are not the features of innocence; they do not express either suspicion or resentment of evil having been contrived against him there; but if the King himself, and those who acted with him in the matter, have contrived this most wicked deed, no conduct could be more artfully conceived, to quench the glammers of men, and to smother the remembrance of mischief.

The deposition of Andrew Henderson, who says that he was secretly lodged in the closet, stuffed in his coat of mail, without being instructed and pre-engaged for the part he was to act, gives an air of fiction to his whole evidence. Who can believe that he could be put upon such desperate service without being told of it, and understanding to go through with it? Such an attempt was not to be trusted, except to one whose passions were excited and courage roused, to encounter the dangers, and overcome the horrors, of such a shocking deed.

The conduct of the two brothers, and their last words, as witnessed after they were gone by the very persons who slew them, betray no consciousness of guilt nor indifference about character. Alexander Ruthven was killed coming down the turnpike-stair from the closet; he had been twice wounded in the closet, and was thereafter run through the body. He made an effort, and was able, before he expired, to turn up his face to them who had pierced him, and to say, "Alas! he was not to blame." Sir Thomas Erskine, and those who were with him, running at the King's cry towards the closet, and finding Earl Gowrie in the close before the house-door, seized him, saying, "Thou art the traitor!" on which he asked what was the matter, and said he did not know. With respect to the character of the two brothers, the King says he was informed of Ruthven, and the Duke of Lennox depones that he informed him that he always acted as a man of prudence and worth. With respect to the

Earl himself, at the University of Padua, where he had been at his education, he was so much regarded that in his last year there he was made rector of the college. He was much esteemed by Theodore Beza; and in the short time he lived after his return, his behaviour was open and candid, as in opposition to the tax proposed by his Majesty, there appeared no reserve or cunning, much less anything dark or diabolical, about him. There is nothing alleged respecting his character similar to such a deed, or that seems to approach it. In King James's character, on the other hand, there are several particulars that are equally atrocious.

The execution of William, the first Earl of Gowrie, after his Majesty was seventeen years of age, and had taken the government upon himself, for a fault which, when tried by the practice or opinion of the nation in those days, was not very great, and for which the King had solemnly pardoned him, and lived with him as fully reconciled, was not much inferior

to it. The murder of Lord Down about the year 1590, shortly before made Earl of Moray by the courtesy of Scotland, he having married the Countess of Moray, daughter and heiress of the good Regent, as he was called, for no other offence but because this marriage, which was offered to him by the lady's mother and herself, interfered with his politics, was fully as bad as that of Earl Gowrie and his brother; and our own historians generally say that the King set on the Marquis of Huntly, and Goodin of Buckie, who burned the castle of Donnybristle, and murdered the Earl; and it is affirmed that, with a design to remove the odium of the nation, which his Majesty had incurred by this cruel assassination, he went into the General Assembly, and made that hypocritical declaration about the Presbyterian Church of Scotland being the purest in the world, and that he was resolved to protect it to his life's end. His conduct in pardoning the Earl and Countess of Somerset for the unexampled

murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, though he had prayed that God might curse him and his posterity if he pardoned them, and the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh, show that dissimulation and artifice, cunning and cruelty, were striking features in James's character, and supposing him to have ordered the killing of Earl Gowrie and his brother, it is not a singular nor anomalous circumstance in his history.

There was an appendix to, or second edition of this plot, which made so much noise some years after. In the year 1608, the Earl of Dunbar informed the King's Advocate that one Sprot, a notary at Eyemouth, knew something of some secret plotting between the deceased Earl of Gowrie and Logan of Restalrig, then also deceased, against King James. Sprot was apprehended by order of the Lord Advocate, and confessed that he had seen letters written by Restalrig about such a business, among the papers of one Laird Bower, who had been servant to Res-

talrig; and that he had abstracted the principal one, which he directed them how to find among his papers; and he said that he had concealed this matter till all the persons concerned in it were dead. His papers were searched, and instead of one, five letters were produced, four of them signed Restalrig, the other not signed at all, at least the subscription taken away, and none of them addressed to any person; and several clergymen and others deponed that they believed they were Restalrig's writing. They speak of some dark design which was to be executed at the danger of life and fortune; but it does not appear from the letters to whom they were sent, or that they were ever sent to any person. Here, then, is a gap in the evidence. To fill this, Sprot, after second thoughts, declares that he had conversed on the subject with Laird Bower and Restalrig himself, and that, to his knowledge, these letters had been sent to Earl Gowrie, and returned by him, with other letters written by the Earl in answer thereto.

78 *The Gowrie Conspiracy*

This confidence in one who has not said that he was to be employed to act any part in the matter, appears both unnecessary and unreasonable. It is as extraordinary that, though he was admitted into the secret, he has not told what their design was; and after the great anxiety mentioned in the letters about burning or returning them to Restalrig, it is surprising that they should have been carelessly left in the keeping of a servant, and as carelessly allowed by the servant to remain among his ordinary papers. Another thing is equally surprising, that though, according to Sprot's account, there were answers by Earl Gowrie to these letters, and Earl Gowrie was cut off prematurely in the midst of this correspondence, yet there were no letters about it, or traces of it found among Earl Gowrie's papers, nor indeed of any conspiracy, though all his letters and papers must have come, without disguise, into the hands of his prosecutors. Neither does this history correspond with Mr. Coupar's narrative, and the first hypo-

thesis about Gowrie's conspiracy, which was, that he had taken no person into his secret. It as little accords with the alleged conspiracy at Perth. The King's declaration bears, that Alexander Ruthven told his Majesty there was no help for him, he must die; whereas, by Sprot's story, Earl Gowrie and Logan of Restalrig were corresponding in the month of July. On the 29th, and even on the 31st days of that month, were letters written by Restalrig sent to the other, and answers received from him, of some scheme which was to be executed against the King at Restalrig's house of Fastcastle; if, then, the Earl and his brother were employed in settling this plot at Fastcastle till the first of August, which was to have been transacted there in a remote and cautious manner, how came they so soon as the fifth of said month to attempt assassinating the King almost publicly, and most imprudently, in the town of Perth? But if this story of Sprot's was as firm as a mountain in other

respects, the concluding circumstance would make it vanish into smoke. He is tried, condemned, and brought to the gallows. He there acknowledges that he well deserved to be put to death ; confesses that he had told many lies about the matter ; affirms that all he had said since a certain date was true ; and then promises that before he expired he would make some remarkable sign that what he now said was true. Accordingly his hands are left loose for the purpose, "and what was marvellous," says Lord Cromarty, "after he had hung some time, he lifted up his hands, and clapped them three times." People are not now so credulous about miracles ; nor was Sprot, who, according to his own account was a liar and a conspirator, the person by whom, or for whom, such works were to be done. If God had been to work a miracle, he could have loosed his hands, or in some other way accomplished it all himself. The leaving his hands loose manifestly indicates that there was some plan concealed amongst them for

which this clapping of the hands was to be the signal; and it is impossible to suppose that it could be anything else than encouraging a worthless man to proceed with a wicked story by a promise that after hanging some time, on his making this sign, which they would call a miracle, the rope should be cut and his life spared. But dead people tell no tales: and it was safest that he should not survive this transaction to give an explanation of it. Lord Cromarty informs us that Dr. Abbott, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, happening to be in Scotland when Sprot was tried and executed, was convinced by his behaviour of the truth of Gowrie's conspiracy. But in opposition to this Dr. Spottiswood, who was afterwards an Archbishop also, and who knew everything about Sprot's trial and was on the scaffold at his execution, did not believe him, and speaks of his story with contempt.

Upon the whole I consider myself justified in saying that the Earl of Gowrie and his brother Alexander Ruthven did not conspire

against King James VI. as was affirmed by him, but that his Majesty did conspire against them and caused their lives to be taken from them.

Unfortunate Earl of Gowrie, thou hast been cruelly slaughtered. Horrible assassination did, on that fifth of August which proved so fatal to thy family, deprive thy country of as promising, as valuable a nobleman, as it has at any time produced. In foreign nations thou wast revered : in thine own nation thou wast basely murdered. Among strangers who knew thy virtue, honour and esteem were accumulated upon thee : because thy virtue was great when thou didst return to thine own, thy Sovereign degraded himself to become thine assassin, because he dreaded that very virtue which others admired. He robbed thee of thy life : and even that was not sufficient to satisfy his spite : courtesy and riot, donations and festivity, exhausted all their force to rob thee also of thine honourable fame and to consign thy name to future ages in the abominable list of dark and

detestable conspiracies. This was worse than the foul murder. How insatiable is savage cruelty. But though justice may be perverted it cannot easily be extirpated altogether: the sentiments of humanity may for a time be diverted by bribes or drowned in uproar, but they will recur in this matter. Justice and humanity are recollecting themselves: and I doubt not but future ages will consider this article of history, which supreme power and cunning have studied to clothe with obscurity, as abundantly clear, and wonder that this ancient and honourable family, when extirpated by the cruelty of their King, should not have excited the strongest and most generous sympathy which their country could bestow.

THIRD PAPER.

This mysterious event is destined to continue wrapt in mystery. After a searching inquiry by the ablest writers it seems impossible to prove to the satisfaction of any

unbiassed reader that there ever was a conspiracy on the part of the unfortunate Ruthvens either alone or in connection with Sir Robert Logan of Restalrig. Notwithstanding the unceasing endeavours of James and his courtiers to induce the people to "declare their satisfaction of the truth of Gowrie's treason," they remained incredulous, and persecution was necessary to compel the clergymen to give thanks for the King's pretended deliverance. After the Rev. Alexander Duff's address on the subject and the published accounts of gentlemen resident in Perth, it was to be presumed that the transaction had appeared in a different light from that which it was intended to do, and that the conspiracy would be seen to be rather on the side of a junto of unprincipled courtiers who easily worked on the superstitious and timorous feelings of the King and shared in the rich and extensive estates of the forfeited nobles.

The proofs on which Gowrie and his

brother are condemned consist chiefly of the account given by the King, the depositions of Andrew Henderson, Sir Hugh Herries, Sir John Ramsay and Sir David Murray, with the spontaneous declaration of William Coupar, a minister in Perth. Coupar's ridiculous tale was made to the King three days after the event, and amounted to this, that he once found Gowrie reading a collection of conspiracies against princes, all of which he observed were foolishly contrived ; for he who engaged in such an enterprise should not confide the secret to any one—a prudent remark certainly for a person undertaking regicide, and is very consistent with the counterpart of the tragedy in which, so far from adhering to secrecy, he is represented as actually in correspondence until 31st July with Sir Robert Logan, then a great distance from Perth, his brother, Alexander Ruthven, and a worthless notary at Eyemouth, being parties in the treasonable plot, the management of the correspondence being entrusted to a

servant of Restalrig, who was quite unworthy of his confidence. Coupar's story would not answer the purpose of those who thirsted for the destruction of the two families and hoped to enjoy the spoil of their rich estates. Small, however, as his belief in the conspiracy might be, he received the bishopric of Galloway as a reward for his officious testimony.

On the King's own narrative it is unnecessary to make much comment. His Majesty's evidence must be substantiated or corroborated by that of other witnesses. In the room to which he was decoyed there stood a person in armour, and the King named three individuals, one of whom he knew to be the man. Two of the accused immediately proved their innocence, when he positively asserted that the other, who was a servant of Gowrie's, was the traitor. The poor man alleged that he was in Dundee the day on which his master was killed, and declared his intention to come and disprove the accusation. This he proceeded to do, but on the way his

body was found in a corn-field with his throat cut.

Andrew Henderson, who was Gowrie's chamberlain, fortunately for the King, avowed himself the man who was armed and placed in the closet; but although the only purpose for which he could have been selected was to murder or make prisoner his Majesty, he solemnly declared his total ignorance of the part he was to act; Henderson very wisely steered clear of all appearance of being "art and part" in treason. He was retained in his office by Sir David Murray who, on the division of the Earldom, was made Lord Scone and was rewarded with that part of Gowrie's estates; but after this event Henderson always appeared with a dejected look as if he was troubled in conscience and held infamous for the part he had acted.

Ramsay, the King's page, who, with Herries and Erskine, was found in the closet with James by Gowrie, who had on the first alarm rushed upstairs and with his brother met an

untimely end, was amply rewarded for his services, being created Viscount Haddington, and as he struck the first blow his reward was won, for he was always chief guest at the anniversary feast, and had a special grant of any favour which he might ask on that day. This last favour seems an extravagant reward, but James had too much "Kingcraft" to allow the Royal State to be hurt or his lordship too much aggrandised by it. He accompanied this grant with so many limitations that it was of little advantage. Although so highly distinguished, Ramsay was held in very little esteem either by the King or courtiers.

The inhabitants of Perth were in the highest degree exasperated by the death of their Provost, for they would not listen to the charge of treason against him, and had the King ventured to depart from Gowrie House before night the consequences would have been fatal. Luckily for the King and his escort, the Earl of Tullibardine happened to be in town, and his exertions materially assisted in

allaying the ferment and effecting the King's retreat. For this he received the Sheriffship of Perth. James considered it of so much importance to pacify the people of Perth, when he could not obtain their belief, that the very day on which sentence of forfeiture was pronounced against Gowrie he gave them a Charter of Confirmation, with grants of many new and extraordinary privileges, awarding them of his royal pleasure the long-contested precedence of Dundee. So very solicitous was he to soothe their just indignation that he overstepped his prerogative, for although this last honour was finally conceded, the process between the Burghs continued before the Lords of Session notwithstanding his decision. So little resentment did this noble monarch feel towards so seditious a city, and so bold and resolute was he that, fearless of other attempts, he visited Perth the following year, became a burgess, signing the Guild-book with his own hand, and showing a favour to the town which no other place ever received.

Not so successful, however, was he with the honest ministers of God's word. He personally laboured to induce them to acquiesce in the truth of his marvellous narrative and to return thanks for his wonderful delivery ; but many of the ministers long refused to notice a conspiracy which they conscientiously believed never existed. The Rev. Mr. Bruce submitted to banishment rather than address the Almighty on a subject which he declared an untruth. If the pretended treason of the laird of Restalrig was not in the proceedings, it would scarcely appear from the "notorious forgeries the mock letters of Logan," as Pinkerton calls them, for they relate to an attempt to secure the King's person in Fast Castle, in the county of Berwick, not to any conspiracy at Perth. These letters, which were not originals, appeared in different numbers and forms during the trial, some being withdrawn, others produced and subsequently enlarged and materially altered. In the agonies of torture, Sprot, the accuser of

Restalrig, confessed they were forgeries; but the Earl of Dunbar, who by the forfeiture got most of Restalrig's estates, assured Sprot that his wife and family should be provided for, and the wretched man being resolved to die and having no wish to live, adhered to his first deposition, and to prevent recantation he was executed next day.

Lord Balmerino's son was buried in the family vault of Restalrig, and when the English army came to Scotland in 1650 the soldiers broke into it, raised up his body, and threw it on the public road on which it was vaunted, "that God made them instruments to punish that cruel deed of his fathers who had raised up the dead body of Restalrig to forfeit it." If there is any belief in the guilt of the unfortunate baron it is what certainly did not exist, except among a few dependents on the accusers or interested in the attainder, at the time when his mouldering remains underwent the extraordinary trial for participation in the so-called Gowrie Conspiracy.

FOURTH PAPER.

A strong presumption that there was a regularly preconcerted plot to murder the two brothers is afforded by the deposition of Thomas Erskine who confesses that so soon as he heard his Majesty cry for help he and his brother gripped Gowrie by the neck saying, "Traitor! this is thy deed," the certain prelude to his death, we may be sure, had not his servant interposed. Discomfited in this quarter, the Erskines joined Ramsay and assisted him in slaying his antagonist Ruthven. The villainy here is so obvious that it would be superfluous to enlarge on it. Is there any probability of such men as the Erskines claspings the Earl of Gowrie by the garter, casting him under their feet and wanting a dagger to strike him because two men were fighting in his house. Such a number of circumstances have come to light as must satisfy every reasonable man that the King and his followers murdered the two Ruthvens.

Alexander Ruthven gave no provocation. If innocent, he was an object of pity. If guilty, the Erskines could easily have secured the half-dead body. Instead of that, the moment they set eyes upon him, without asking him a single question, or waiting to hear him speak, they darted upon him, wounded and unarmed as he was, and instantly killed him. Nearly similar were the circumstances attending Gowrie's death. The securing the two brothers and bringing them to trial alive would have afforded some satisfaction to the world. It was a duty which the King owed to himself, to his dependents, and specially to the house of Ruthven, as the lives and reputations of all these were so much implicated in the charge. Had he wished to have the matter fairly and openly investigated he would have preferred this to that of first taking away the lives of the two noblemen, hanging, torturing and banishing each of their adherents as evinced any disposition to show their innocence, and then bestowing bounties on perjury and

murder in their enemies. Gowrie's murderers gave no reason why they put him to death. Even by their own account they did not know that he had any design on either the life or liberty of the King. In what estimation can we hold the man who, having perpetrated a crime, the most atrocious within the reach of man, instantly goes as it were before his maker and declares himself perfectly innocent. If he really did address the Almighty in this manner, how contemptible must his character have appeared to those of his accomplices who were in the secret. When Younger attempted to go to Falkland to expurgate himself, he was met by a party sent by the King commanded by Col. Bruce. Younger, being aware of his danger as being a servant of Gowrie, attempted to secret himself in a field of corn. But Bruce discovered and slew him, and then carried his body to Falkland where it was exposed to public view as the body of a traitor, his Majesty giving out that it was the identical person who was in the

turret. But it became known afterwards that Younger was in Dundee at the time of his master's death. James, being in no way abashed at telling so many falsehoods, offered a bribe to induce some one to come forward and assume the character of the armed man in the turret chamber and at this point Henderson (probably because of the bribe) came forward and declared himself to have been the man.

On the following morning the Privy Council at Edinburgh received by express the King's account of the transaction, and along with it an injunction to command the clergy of Edinburgh instantly to convene the people in the churches and publicly thank God for his Majesty's deliverance. John Graham of Balgowan also arrived in Edinburgh and gave a description of the event, and David Moyes a servant in the King's house sent another. The writers of these neglected to compare notes, the want of which precaution spoiled all, there being a

great discrepancy between them. The clergy, therefore, refused to insult the Almighty by a thanksgiving of a deliverance from danger which never existed. The result was that the clergy were by the King banished from the city and prevented from preaching in Scotland under pain of death. All of them were eventually recalled.

Of all the ruffians who were concerned in this diabolical transaction by much the most redoubtable was King James VI. Although it was his fortune to reign over several millions of his fellow creatures, yet a character so shamefully base and enormously wicked is seldom called to act on the stage of life. James possessed dissimulation and hypocrisy in an eminent degree. His domestic character was among the most vicious and disgraceful that could be conceived, yet in public he made a great show of religion and some times on improper occasions. Such as by falling down on his knees along with his attendants as soon as he had despatched

Gowrie and his brother and thanking God for his deliverance !

To secure success in a matter of so much importance, Gowrie, had he been the conspirator, would have adopted the most decisive measures, and among others he would have had three or four resolute accomplices in readiness within this apartment—for it was incapable of containing a large number—and, to bar accidents, some hundreds of his vassals stationed in other parts of the house and offices. Instead of a numerous assembly of Gowrie's retainers, we hear of only a single individual. The precise words made use of in the turret-chamber must be of the very utmost importance to those who believe that some such words were spoken, yet we are completely left in the dark respecting them by Henderson, and he is the only one who pretended to be present.

When Gowrie was murdered there was found in the pocket of his doublet a little parchment bag full of medical characters and

words of enchantment which he had studied in Padua. He is said to have been an enthusiastic chemist, and, in common with many eminent men of that age, a dabbler in astrology. It is curious that this propensity to magic and visionary pursuits was hereditary in the Ruthven family. His grandfather, the murderer of Riccio, had given Queen Mary a magic ring as a protection against poison. His father, the leader in the Raid of Ruthven, when in Italy had his fortune foretold by a wizard; and the son when some of his friends had killed an adder in Strathbraan lamented their haste, and told them he would have diverted them by making it dance to the tune of some cabalistic words which he had learned in Italy from a famous necromancer and diviner.*

A modern writer† of great experience says: I have read nearly all that has been written on the subject. Every particle of historical evidence that I have met with has

* Tytler, vol. iv.

† G. P. R. James.

tended to impress upon my mind the firm belief that the last Earl of Gowrie was as amiable, as enlightened, and as innocent of all offence against the King as any man in Scotland. His name, his race, his position and his opinions rendered him obnoxious to the King. I find on reading the letters and memoirs of contemporaries that very few persons believed him guilty, and that James had recourse to all the resources of persecution in order to silence the many voices which too loudly proclaimed him innocent.

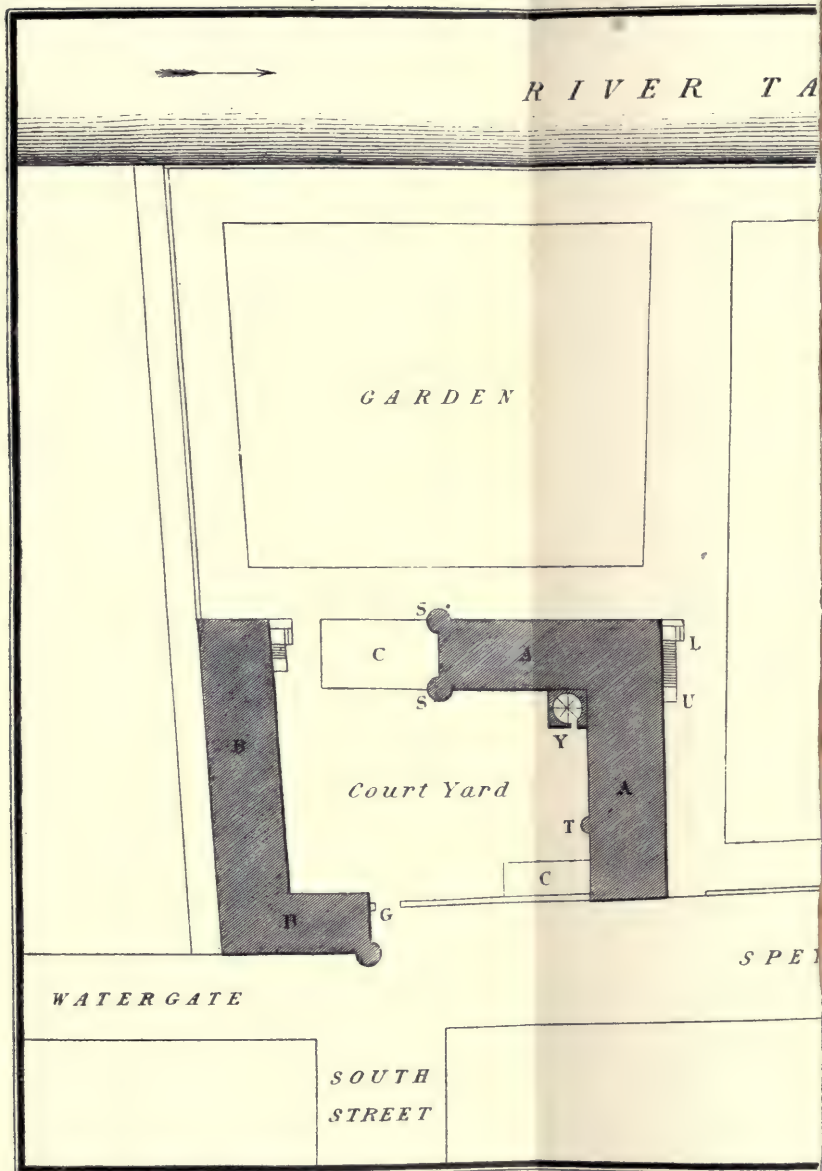
“Thus perished the noble, the brave, and the true,
Thus triumphed the feeble, the base, and the
treacherous.”

NOTES ON THE PLAN.

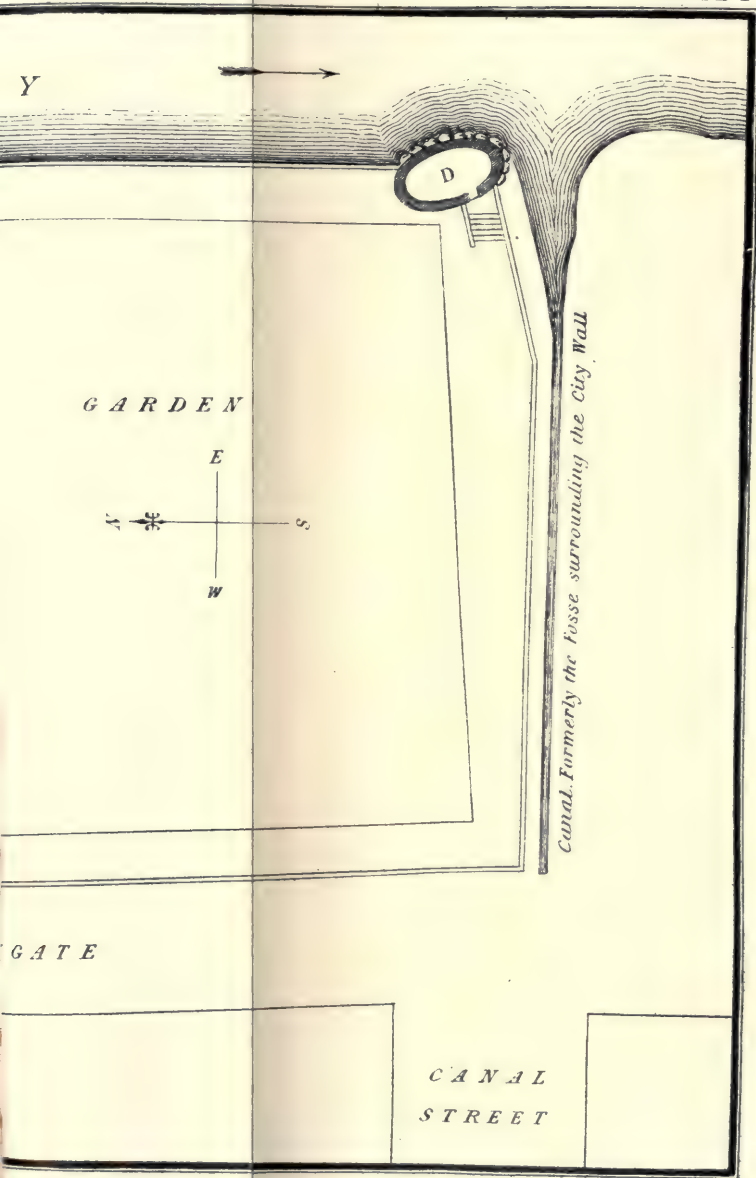
Gowrie House formed nearly a square. That part in which the affray took place was on the south and east side of the square. A A the buildings ; C C were temporary sheds for the artillery. The principal staircase, Y, was at the south-east angle of the court. There was a smaller staircase at T, called the Black Turnpike. The principal building, A A, was of two storeys. The family apartments and bedrooms were in the division A D, Plan No. 2, surrounded by two turrets. The dining-room was at D, the window of which looked into the garden. The principal hall, H, communicated with the staircase Y, and with the dining-room. There was a door at U, leading by a flight of steps, U L, to the garden. The greater part of the second floor, Plan 3, was occupied by a gallery, A, which extended over the whole of that part of the building. The gallery was richly ornamented with paintings and works of art. There was a turret, X, communicating with the gallery chamber.

After dinner, the King, with Alexander Ruthven, left the room D, Plan No. 2, passed through the hall H, where his escort were, to the staircase Y, which they ascended. Shortly after Sir John Ramsay and the laird of Pittencreiff went up the stair Y into the gallery A. Gowrie believed the King had gone off to Falkland, and told his guests so ; but the porter said that could

Gowrie Castle
GOWRIE HOUSE & ADJACENT



A.A. The ancient portion of Gowrie House, consisting of three floors and attics. B.B. The new house. C. The Chapel. D. The Monk's Tower. G. The Entrance Gate. S.S. Two Turrets. T. The Pond.



modern portion of Gowriehouse. C.C. Temporary Sheds, latterly used for Artillery.
Black Turnpike. L.U. Flight of Steps leading to the Garden.

not be, as he had the key of the back gate. While they were debating this point the King's voice was heard crying "Treason," and in looking up from the street in front of the gate G to the window in the turret O, Plan 3, they beheld, according to the official report, the King and the hand of a man stopping his mouth.

Mar and Lennox ran across the court to the staircase Y, which they ascended and crossed to gallery A, but found the door to the gallery chamber at F locked. This door they tried to break open, but could not. Ramsay, finding the door to the Turnpike T open, ran up that stair, entered the gallery chamber C, where he is reported to have found the King and Ruthven struggling. Ruthven was thrust down the Turnpike T, wounded. At the bottom of the stair he was slain by Herries and Erskine.

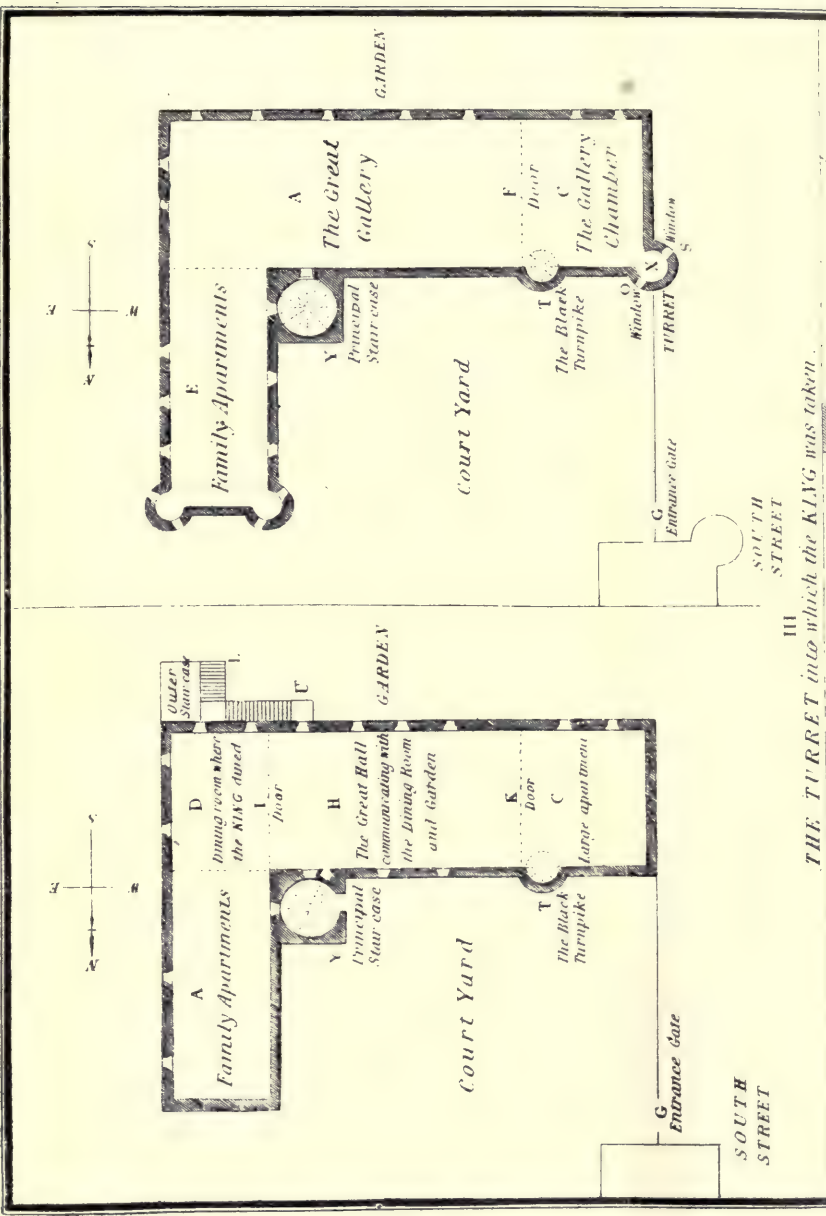
Henderson at Falkland said he was crossing toward the other window when Alexander Ruthven came in (from the window at S, Plan No. 3, to the window O), but was crossed in his path by Ruthven. If the King stood opposite the door and looking towards it, then when Ruthven entered and advanced towards the King the situation of parties is believed to be nearly that of the letters K, R, H—K being the situation of the King; R that of Ruthven; H that of Henderson, stopped in crossing the round apartment. A struggle ensued in that situation, Ruthven attempting to bind the King's hands. Henderson went up to them, being on the

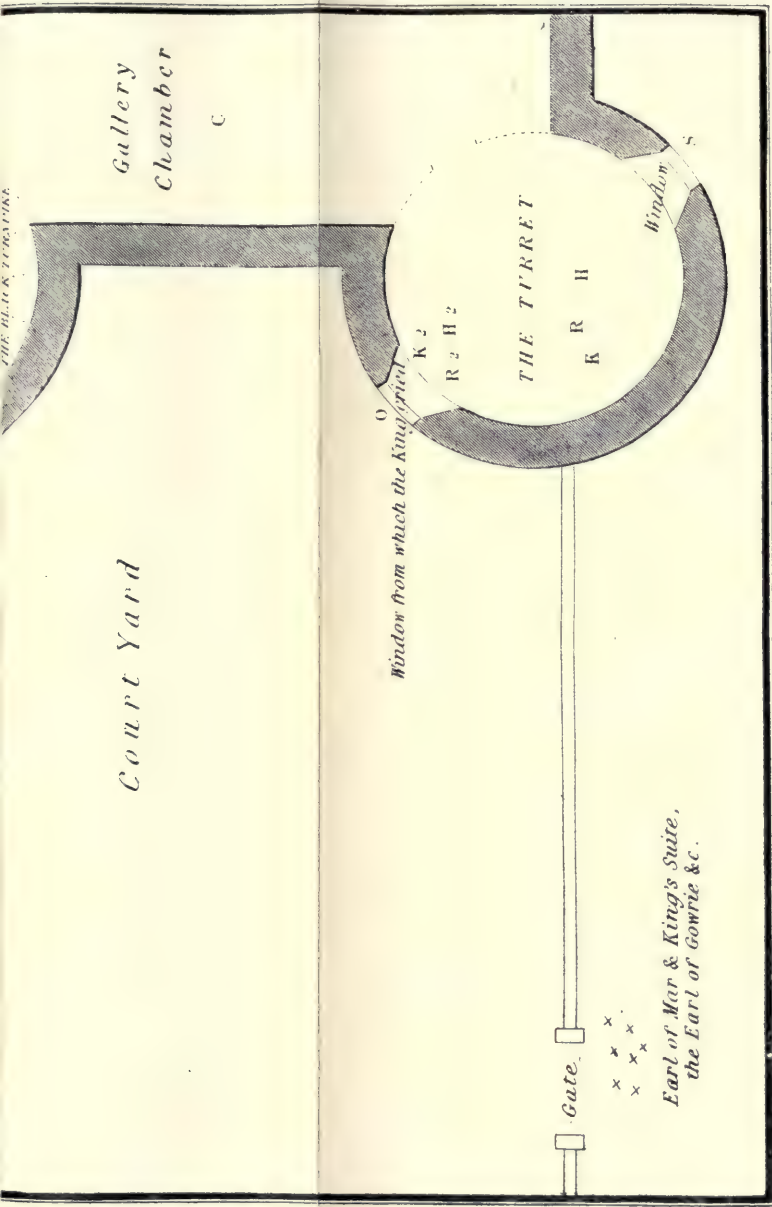
King's right and on Ruthven's left hand. The King cast loose his left hand, Henderson says. In that case the garter for binding him must have been in Ruthven's left hand, as he had made use of his right in seizing the King's left. In that situation the garter was easily pulled from him, as described by Henderson, who stood at his left. The King then "loups free," that is, makes either towards the door or towards the window. Ruthven turns round, follows him, and seizes him again near the window, while both were followed by Henderson. Here the situation is so far changed that Henderson H² is now on the right of Ruthven R² and on the left of the King K², the two latter being between the former and the window. In this situation Ruthven takes hold of the King's throat with his left hand and puts his right in the King's mouth to prevent his cries. Henderson then stretches his left hand over between the parties toward the window. It was only in that position that the King could have been seen by the party near the gate without the persons with whom he was struggling being also visible. The window S looked directly to the Spy tower; this was the wrong window, and Henderson went to window O. (Henderson's account cannot be accepted as *bona fide*.)

(These plans are reproduced from the McOmie drawings in the possession of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society, and may be accepted as authentic and accurate.)

Howie Conspiracy

I
 FIRST FLOOR
 above the Kitchen or Ground Floor.
 II
 SECOND FLOOR
 above the Kitchen or Ground Floor.
 PLATE II





K, R, H, Position of the King, the Master of Ruthven and Andrew Henderson, on their entrance into the Turret & at the commencement of the Struggle
K 2, R 2, H 2, Their relative Situations, at the time the King fled for help.

CHAPTER III.

Reasons for Disbelieving the Official Narrative —
Evidence against the King—The Nicolson-Cecil
Correspondence—The Hill Burton version and its
value.

THERE are some highly ridiculous touches in the official narrative. For example, if Alexander Ruthven wanted to assassinate the King he had a sufficient opportunity of doing so when he got him into the turret chamber. Had Ruthven been the conspirator he would have despatched the King instantly when he had him in that secure position and the door of the chamber locked. And, again, Ruthven, according to this narrative, told the King that "he killed his father and must therefore die," and thereupon wrestled with the King; finally, he put his hand in the King's mouth and attempted to tie him with a cord or garter.

Could anything in the circumstances be more grotesque? Yet posterity is asked to believe this imbecile record of the King. Ruthven knew the King's escort was downstairs, that time was precious and delay fatal. If he decoyed the King into the turret chamber in order to kill him, is it likely he would waste time discussing the situation? It is important to notice that it is not even hinted in this narrative that Ruthven attempted to slay the King or that he had any intention whatever of doing so. The argument proceeds: "What want ye," said the King, "if ye seek not my life?" "But a promise, Sir," was the reply. "What promise?" "Sir, my brother will tell you." "Go, fetch him, and in your absence I will neither cry nor lift up the window." All this is the merest fable. No such words were ever spoken, nor can they be verified. For Ruthven to leave the apartment at so critical a moment was ridiculous if he decoyed the King there in order to assassinate him; but if the King was the conspirator, it was an

ingenious touch of imagination, because the King by that means might secure the Ruthvens in the chamber, and in that compromising position the King was not so likely to be suspected, and the Ruthvens would the more easily be despatched : this is practically what happened. In criticising the narrative the mysterious man with the pot of gold may be dismissed as a myth. The King had an unquenchable thirst for money. His extravagant demands for it caused an interruption in the relations between him and Gowrie. He surrendered his soul to Elizabeth for English gold, and his love of it would not allow him to save his mother from execution.

There is a point in the case not referred to by any writer except one,* and that is that Gowrie was attending a marriage on the 5th August, when he got notice of the King's arrival. If the statement be true, it is sufficient of itself to establish Gowrie's innocence. It has never been contradicted.

* Alexander Duff.

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In the matter of the conversation in the turret chamber we are surrounded with difficulty. Assuming that it never occurred, and that the muffled man was a myth, we have the problem of three armed men being there, supposed by one writer* to be three servants of Gowrie's, bribed. This is unlikely, and in the circumstances is now impossible to determine. There is nothing but the King's statement for a muffled man being there, and his pretended ignorance of who that man was, and charging three men with it who all could prove an *alibi*, suggests the idea that the story is a fable. It does not seem probable that any man could be there who was unknown to the King. Evidently the story was a device of the King to throw suspicion on the Ruthvens, as none but they could put a muffled man in that position. Henderson's evidence may be put aside as unreliable. It is stated that Ramsay, Herries, and Murray, went up to the turret chamber as soon as they saw

* Calderwood.

the King's head at the window. This is again the King's narrative, and the question may naturally be asked how far it is true. We do not presume to answer it, for no one can. One thing is clear, if Gowrie had put any muffled men there they would have been massacred along with Alexander Ruthven; but no such massacre occurred. One writer* says that Herries "was one of the three armed men lodged in the closet." If that were true, Ramsay and Murray, or Ramsay and Erskine, would be the others. The statement, which may be quite accurate, wants confirmation.

There is no doubt, as one writer states, that if the King had been killed it would have ruined the Gowrie family, seeing the King had openly gone into Gowrie House, and Gowrie would have been accountable for his protection. We are told, as a matter of fact, that the opinion in Perth, from the day the deed was done, was that the King was the

* Alexander Duff.

conspirator ; further, that the death of Gowrie was denounced as a cruel murder. Considering that Gowrie was an exceptionally popular Provost of Perth, and that there was no independent evidence, outside the King's narrative, that he was concerned in the conspiracy, the people of Perth were bound to entertain hostile feelings to the King. This view of the case is justified when we consider the King's conduct in pardoning the Earl and Countess of Somerset for the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury, though he had prayed that God might curse him and his posterity if he pardoned them ; and his execution of Sir Walter Raleigh, one of the greatest men of his time, clearly shows that dissimulation and artifice, cunning and cruelty, were striking features in James's character : and supposing him to have ordered the assassination of Gowrie and his brother it cannot be regarded as a singular or anomalous circumstance in his history.* This is an estimate of James's character which is evidently true, and

* Alexander Duff.

weighed in the balance of the Gowrie conspiracy must involve him in great suspicion.

James's conduct after the event is anything but reassuring. He had greatly exasperated the citizens of Perth by killing in cold blood their much-honoured Provost. They would not believe his statement that the conspiracy was the act of Gowrie, and to such an extent did this feeling prevail, that he had to wait inside Gowrie House on the fatal day till it was dark and then slip away quietly and secretly with his escort to Falkland in order to save his life. He made a bold effort to pacify the people of Perth by granting them charters and all kinds of privileges; visiting Perth on many occasions, eventually becoming a burgess and signing his name in the book of the Guild, and afterwards becoming Provost. The transparency of this could mislead no one. But the question remains, what was James's object in committing this crime, if he did commit it. He was a jealous man. He was not highly educated. He could not bear a rival to his

popularity, and his throne might be in danger. Gowrie, on the other hand, was a scholar: one of the most accomplished men of his time: a favourite at the Court of England: a general favourite in Scotland, and as Provost of Perth was beloved by the people: so much so, that when he was completing his education in Padua (six years) the Town Council of Perth kept him in the Provostship and would have no other. This is a compliment that never was paid to a Provost of Perth either before or since, and it indicates to what extent the Ruthvens were respected in the Fair City. James was well aware of all this, but his jealous nature would not permit him to recognise in his kingdom any man more accomplished or more popular than himself. He had much of his father's blood in his veins, as this event shows. It has been said by some writers that the Gowries would be competitors with him for the throne of England. We have no proof whatever that Gowrie had any such intention. So far as

Gowrie's disposition is known to us, he was not a man of that character at all. We have certainly not much material to draw upon, but what we do know indicates that he was a man of a peaceful and retiring disposition, loyal and submissive to the King rather than an instigator of rebellion. He was in every respect unlike his father. The Raid of Ruthven, for which his father was beheaded, involved James in ten months' captivity. The King's unforgiving spirit could never forget this. We can scarcely suppose that, having sufficiently punished the father, he would repeat the punishment on the son, but this no one can determine. After the removal of the two Ruthvens he issued a proclamation for the apprehension of the two remaining brothers, and was successful in capturing one of them, whom he kept in the Tower of London for nineteen years. This was a highly suspicious circumstance. He also gave peremptory orders for the abolition of the name of Ruthven, and the Ruthven lands near Perth

were thereafter called Huntingtower. Of all the Stuart race none played the rôle of despot more than James. Another act of great suspicion was the division (after confiscation) of the extensive estates of Gowrie amongst the very men who were foremost in the commission of this crime. Ramsay and Erskine, who really were the murderers, were rewarded as follows:—Ramsay with an annuity of £1000 per annum and Melrose Abbey with its extensive revenues: Erskine with the beautiful estate of Dirleton. In regard to the others, Murray got the estate of Scone; Stewart the Strathbraan and Trochrie properties. The Murrays of Tullibardine got the lands in Strathearn, Tullibardine the Sheriffship of Perth, Sir Mungo Murray the house and lands and barony of Ruthven. Of all James's followers, Sir David Murray would seem to have been the best, and whatever may have been his connection with the conspiracy he certainly kept himself as far as possible in the background. He was created Lord Scone,

and he and his son, Viscount Stormont, were (excepting three years) Provosts of Perth from 1601 to 1627.

The Gowrie Conspiracy happened at a time when the administration of Scottish affairs was conducted without either morality or integrity. The Court of James was, as that of his mother, very corrupt. Under both rulers, the Scottish nobles and the Scottish officers of State were destitute of moral rectitude, and in an eminent degree betrayed their trust, disregarded their allegiance, and identified themselves with crime, rapine, and murder. In these crimes were involved treason and forgery and the wholesale execution of innocent persons. The effect of this upon the nation was hurtful, prejudicial, paralysing. It stopped the progress of civilisation and prohibited any effort to carry on the Government in a lawful and just manner. Why, for example, if James was an innocent man, did he, on the 23rd August, execute, after a mock trial, the three confi-

dential servants of Gowrie, Cranston, Craigen-gelt and Macgregor, all of whom were eye-witnesses of the event. The explanation evidently is that James was determined to remove every person who would or could give evidence in Gowrie's favour, whose testimony was not only of the utmost importance, but would have solved the mystery of the guilt or innocence of the King. The attitude of the King and the entire circumstances of the Gowrie Conspiracy, we think, leave no room to doubt that he was the author. Assuming James to have been the head of this mysterious plot, it exhibits his unforgiving nature as well as his relentless character, which was more censurable than that of the first Earl of Gowrie whom he beheaded and greatly more blameworthy than that of his son Charles I. who also was executed.

EVIDENCE AGAINST THE KING.

We will now proceed to reproduce some startling testimony from eye-witnesses and from contemporary writers which does not appear to have been published before. The event, as might be expected, created an impression over Scotland which was appalling, and a close inspection of the correspondence of the period, so far as deposited in the State Paper Offices, reveals one conspicuous point, and that is that not one of these letters condemns Gowrie. It must be kept in view that, as the King was involved in this matter, no one was safe to write much about it, unless they took the King's part. The letters we now reproduce are written with bated breath on the vital point; but if Gowrie had been the actual conspirator, these writers, we think, would have exposed him in very different terms. These letters, which we have modernised, will bear more than one perusal as they are at times not very intelligible. They are, with

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one exception, addressed to Sir Robert Cecil, Elizabeth's Prime Minister, and strange though it may seem, we have not been able to discover any of Cecil's replies. Nicolson was Elizabeth's envoy in Scotland, and unlike some of his predecessors he was a man of integrity and good principle. Every word that he has written about this conspiracy may be accepted, for his words are not only significant but true. In his estimation the general opinion prevailing was, that it was a conspiracy of the King to slay the Gowries. His letter of August 11, 1600, to Sir Robert Cecil is of great importance. He was compelled to send the King's version of the deed to England because "the King caused it to be written." In his position he had no alternative; but he goes on to tell Cecil that there are great doubts of the truth of the King's report, and that these doubts are greatly increasing. Unless the King bring the conspirators to the scaffold, the people will form dangerous opinions about him;

they will believe him guilty and Gowrie innocent. But the most serious charge in this letter is that the reports of the conspiracy coming from the King differ. This is probably the strongest point recorded against the King, a point from which he cannot escape. An innocent man could only have given one version, and whatever the King's intentions were, we fear he must stand convicted in the eyes of posterity. Nicolson is careful and guarded in his language about the King, but he tells us that Alexander Ruthven wore on the occasion a silk cut doublet without armour, whether with or without weapon he does not seem to know. Gowrie himself, he alleges, was without arms, save two rapiers, which he had to borrow. Nicolson's reference to the attitude of the clergy is very cautiously put; but, reading between the lines, we see that these were not at all convinced of the *bona fides* of the King's narrative. And, in view of the Ruthvens being both defenceless, this is a strong argument in their favour.

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But Nicolson, though he makes no comment, makes it clear to Cecil what he means. "*The matter is believed to be otherwise than the King reports it ; all parts of the country, so far as I can learn, are in great suspicion at the King's attitude.*" This is language that cannot be misunderstood. In the following correspondence we begin with Nicolson's letter of 29 January, 1600. A Convention of some importance was summoned by the King at which he made his demand for money for his honourably entering on the Crown of England after Elizabeth. The meeting was out of sympathy with him, and he lost his temper. The Earl of Gowrie made a speech about the extravagant proposal of the King, expressing his dissatisfaction with it, at which the King fell into a rage and dismissed the Convention. The proceedings are too lengthy to be reproduced in full, but we give that part referring to Gowrie, which is all that concerns us.

By an Act of Sederunt of the Court of

Session dated June 20th, 1600, the King, on Gowrie's return to Scotland, appears to have been his debtor to the extent of £80,000. It represented the sums which William Earl of Gowrie became liable for on behalf of the King. To this extent Gowrie had burdened his estates. It is believed that James never intended to pay this debt, and this condition of affairs may be understood from the following letter from Lady Gowrie to Lord Balmerino, 2nd Nov., 1600, in which she desires him to bring the matter before the King. She appeals for her bereaved daughters, whose estate is very desolate, and for help for herself to meet creditors' claims. "I am so overcharged with the payment of annual rents for his Majesty's debts, contracted during the time of my husband being Treasurer, which loans were taken on my fee lands, that I am scarcely able to entertain my own estates, much less to bear the burden of others." The King wanted to borrow more money, viz., £40,000, and it is not to be wondered at that at the Conven-

tion at Perth, when it came up, Gowrie should in such strong terms have opposed it. "It was not consistent with his Majesty's dignity to ask more than the country could give and to expose himself to the humiliation of a denial; neither was it consistent with a proper regard for the honour of either the King or the country to reveal the poverty of the land."

GEORGE NICOLSON *to* SIR ROBERT CECIL.

"June 29, 1600.

"When it came to my Lord of Gowrie he said he had been long out of the country and ignorant of the matter, yet accounted it all one and equivalent to the 100,000 crowns; or better that the King should have £40,000 and their like help for an army when time should serve, adding that it would be dishonourable to the King should he ask more than the country could give, and be denied; and most dishonourable to King and country that it should be supposed they could give

him but little. At this the King was enraged, and seeing on Thursday it would be no better, he dismissed the Convention with thanks to the nobility, assuring and promising them his friendship and favour in all their actions, and threatening the Barons and Burghs that, as their advice lay in his way, he should remember them and be even with them. He would call a Parliament and displace them by vote of Parliament and Convention. He gave them a vote in both and made them a fourth estate which he should undo again."

GEORGE NICOLSON to SIR ROBERT CECIL.

"EDINBURGH, *August* 11, 1600.

"Anent this tragedy, I have certified it in effect as the K[ing] caused it to be written; but notwithstanding, there has arisen great doubts of the truth thereof, which increase so exceedingly, as unless the K[ing] take some of the conspirators and give them out of his hands to the town and ministers (to be tried and examined) for the confessing and clearing

of themselves and the people, on the scaffold or at their execution, a hard and dangerous impression of the King and his dealings in this matter will enter and remain in the hearts of the people and of great ones how fair soever they may have carried it to the K[ing]. It is begun to be noted that the reports coming from the K[ing] differ, that the man who should have been in the turret chamber said so; and yet was there without heart or hand and had many names. No such man was taken or known or judged to be, till Saturday, when the K[ing] sending to take him he was thereupon slain. The K[ing] was angry because he was not saved; that Thomas Cranston wounded and in danger of death should make and subscribe a declaration clearing the Earl and his brother; and that the master should be without armour in a silk cut doublet to the shirt, some say without weapon and others with his dagger in its sheath undrawn so found when slain. The Earl hearing of the stir and death of his brother, ran

and got a weapon and he and Thomas Cranston, his servant, following were encountered and set upon by Sir Thomas Erskine with his two attendants, Wilson and Murray, and with the recently made knights, Sir John Ramsay and Sir Hugh Herries, Sir Thomas Erskine being leader, and the Earl slain by Sir Thomas and found as his brother was without any armour save a rapier or two with him. There are many other circumstances as that the Earl had almost nobody with him, &c., which the people have among them. *The matter is believed to be otherwise than the K[ing] reports it.* The ministers were ordered to intimate the matter to the people. I hear as yet they have got no further in the pulpits than that if the Earl and his brother attempted such a treasonable purpose, they had their death worthily, and it merited the rooting out of their race, but if it were otherwise it was a token of a great judgment over the land. However, they were glad and praised God that the K[ing] was safe, and

desired God to reveal the truth, saying that from that place they were to say no more till they had good warrant of the certainty, and much more to this effect very warily going no further. All parts of the country so far as I can hear are in great suspicion at the K[ing's] attitude. Mr. Thomas Cranston is brought in a litter to Falkland where Mr. Wm. Rhynd, the Earl's pedagogue and secretary, are prisoners. They deny any such intention on the part of the Earl or his brother yet it is thought the K[ing] shall force from them the truth of what they know."

The ministers banished by the King were : Mr. Ro. Bruce, Mr. Walter Balcanquil, Mr. William Watson, Mr. Jo. Hall, and Mr. James Balfour.

GEORGE NICOLSON *to* SIR ROBERT CECIL.

"EDINBURGH, *August 21, 1600.*

"That you may still know what comes further of this late matter here, I have thought it well to notify what I hear as

followeth. First, I hear that the more the k[ing] dealeth in this matter, the greater do the doubts arise in the minds of the people as to what is the truth of the k[ing's] part. Mr. Wm. Rhynd, the pedagogue, hath been extremely bullied, but confesseth nothing against the Earl or his brother, nor does Thomas Cranston or George Craigengelt confess anything against the Earl. These men protested against doing so very strongly, and in case torture made them say otherwise, it was not true or to be trusted. This was said before the torturing. They solemnly affirmed as they should answer to God."

SIR WILLIAM BOWES to SIR JOHN
STANHOPE.

"BRADLEY, *September 2, 1600.*

"In attending his Majesty's ambassador to Newcastle I happened to meet with Mr. Preston, then on his way from his Sovereign to her Majesty. In renewing our acquaintance,

I found him very willing to inform me of his report of the death of Gowrie and his brother, in the circumstances whereof sundry things occurring hardly probable I was careful to let him see that wise men with us stumbled thereat, and therefore I thought it wisdom in the k[ing] to deliver his honour to the world and specially to her Majesty. Albeit I am not ignorant that the actions of princes must challenge the fairest interpretation yet in deed truth can do no wrong, and we owe our greatest truths to our sovereigns. In this matter so, precisely masked let me say to you what for my own part I do believe.

“The k[ing] being ready to take horse was withdrawn in conversation with the m[aste]r of Gowrie a learned sweet and amiable young gentleman and one other attending; the speech was about Earl Gowrie his father having been executed; the k[ing] angrily said he was a traitor whereat the youth showed a grieved and expostulatory countenance at such-like words. The k[ing] seeing

himself alone and without weapon cried, "treason, treason." The m[aste]r abashed much to see the k[ing] to apprehend it so whilst the k[ing] called to the Lords, the Duke, Mar and others who were attending in the court Ruthven put forth his hand to stay the k[ing] showing his countenance to those without, in that mood, and immediately fell on his knees to entreat the k[ing]. At the k[ing's] sound of treason from out of the lower chamber, Herries the physician, Ramsay his page and Sir Thomas Erskine came to where the k[ing] was, where Ramsay ran the poor gentleman through sitting as it is said upon his knees. At this moment the Earl with his master Stabler and some others best knowing the house and the ways of communication came first to the slaughter where finding his brother dead and the k[ing] retired (for they had persuaded him into an adjoining room) fighting began between the Earl and the other. Mr. Preston says that upon their announcement that the [king] was slain the

Earl shrank from the pursuit, and one of the aforementioned rushing suddenly upon him, thrust him through and he fell down and instantly expired. This matter seeming to have an accidental beginning, to give it an honourable name, is pursued with odious treasons, conjurations, &c., imputed to the dead Earl, with the death of the m[aste]r. Knights were the actors and many others such as I know are notified to you long ere this. The ministers are curious to make a thanksgiving to God when they think more need of fasting in sackcloth and ashes to the k[ing]. There is great discontent.

“This I must not say is categorically true, but sympathetically I take it so to be where-upon may be inferred that as the death of the two first may be excused by tendering the very show of hazard to a king, so is the making of religion and justice cloaks to cover accidental oversights a matter which both heaven and earth will judge. The borders by some accidents and the ordinary time of

the year serving to the thieves' advantage grow very disorderly, and the west in many ways are declining from bad to worse. Commending my service and good affection to yourself, I betake you to the grace of God."

GEORGE NICOLSON *to* SIR ROBERT CECIL.

"EDINBURGH, *October 28, 1600.*

"Here is a whispering that a book should be printed in England contradicting the k[ing's] narrative of the Gowrie Conspiracy."

MASTER OF GRAY *to* SIR ROBERT CECIL.

"*October 31, 1600.*

"As for Gowrie's death, it is very strange for the Duke (Lennox) says, he was there, and yet if he were on oath he could not say whether the deed proceeded from Gowrie or the king."

SIR ROGER ASTON to SIR ROBERT CECIL.

The following is an extract merely: the other portions of the letter do not affect us.

“BERWICK, *November 1, 1600.*

“He only has been plainest with the king concerning the queen and the late attempts of Gowrie which as yet cannot be said to have any further reason then his one statement alone, “what the queen’s part was in the matter God knows”: the presumptions were great both by letters and tokens as also by her own behaviour after the deed was done; all which was laid before the king and yet he could not be persuaded to take up the matter, but has and does seek by all means to cover her folly. She has now won so far into the king by her behaviour towards him as no man dare deal further on that matter. She does daily keep the preaching and entertains the king in a more kind and loving sort than ever she did before. She now will obey the king in what

so ever is his will. This does strike in the hearts of many and yet cannot amend it but we commit the cause to God."

ELIZABETH to JAMES.

"*September 14, 1600.*

The following is an extract from one of Elizabeth's characteristic letters:—

"That where they say Gowrie had a thousand spirits his familiars I suppose none were left in hell, so many were in there and therefore you may joy the more, that God doth the better defend you, and that no infernal power bears any sway where a higher force makes defence; whom I beseech to keep you under His wings, who can raise and spill, and I pray you to inquire of this gent[leman] if he heard me say this, and other things concerning you, and so I end to trouble you with my scribbling."

The way some historians treat this event is, to say the least, remarkable. One of our

latest authorities * is convinced that it was a conspiracy by Gowrie, and his reason is founded on certain letters alleged to have been written from Fast Castle by Logan of Restalrig and discovered five years afterwards. These letters, which we will reproduce, are admitted to be forgeries. We have no proof that Logan was even present at the Gowrie Conspiracy. If he had been a conspirator he would undoubtedly have been there. And there are no letters from the Ruthvens compromising them; nor, indeed, are there any letters from the King or any one on his behalf. It is of importance to notice how Burton puts the case. He says the absurdity of the King's conduct naturally staggers, on the very threshold of this adventure, any one to whom his character is new. But familiarity with his ways and moods will reconcile one to his conduct in this affair. . . . There was no hospitable preparation in the house for the reception of a

* Hill Burton.

royal guest. The King's followers saw, or imagined that they had seen, an appearance of excitement, restlessness and anxiety in the deportment of the two brothers. The minute investigations subsequently made reveal to us the items of the King's dinner on that day. George Craigengelt, the cook, testified that he was told of his sudden arrival and ordered to cook dinner for the King. When he came to the kitchen "he found no appearance of meat for the King." His first step was to send out to Duncan Robertson's house where he got a moor-fowl. Thereafter he caused make ready a shoulder of mutton and a hen, and he went up and brought down some strawberries and dressed five or six dishes of dessert. Soon after dinner Alexander Ruthven beckoned the King aside. Lennox said he asked the Earl where the King had gone to, and got for answer "that his Majesty was gone out quietly some quiet errand." The Earl then, according to Lennox, called for the key of the garden and went into it lounging with

a few of the courtiers. It was a summer day and just after dinner. Thomas Cranston, one of the Earl's domestics, came speedily into the garden, calling out that the King had gone forth by the back gate and was riding through the fields. On that the Earl cried out, "Horse, Horse," and though his domestic told him his horses were on the other side of the Tay he still continued to cry. Lennox passed through the quadrangle to the gate and asked the porter if the King had gone forth but was told that he had not. The Earl then said he would go and get certain intelligence, and returning he assured them that the King had gone out by the back gate and was well on his way. On this the group of courtiers passed out and stood apparently in hesitation and consultation in front of the gate. There they were close under the turret which overhung the wall from the corner of the north wing. Lennox said he heard a voice and said to Mar, "This is the King's voice that cries be he where he will," and so

they all looked up and saw the King furth at the window wanting his hat, his face very red, and one hand gripping his cheek and mouth, and the King cried : “ I am murdered ; treason ! my Lord Mar, help, help ! ” Lennox says, “ They all ran up the stair of the gallery chamber where the King was to have relieved him ; and as they pressed up they found the door of the chamber fast ; and seeing a ladder standing beside they rushed at the door with the ladder, and the steps of the ladder broke, and some they sent for hammers ; and notwithstanding large forcing with hammers they got not entry until after the Earl of Gowrie and his brother were both slain ; that Robert Bevan passed about by the back door and came to the King and assured him that it was the Duke and the Earl of Mar who were striking upon the chamber door ; and the hammer was given through the hole of the door of the chamber and they within broke the door and gave them entry. And at their first entry they saw Gowrie lying dead in the

chamber; his brother being slain and taken downstairs before their entry; and at their first entry within that chamber where the King was, the deponent saw sundry halberts and swords striking under the door of the chamber and sides thereof by reason the same was nae closs door; and knew none of the strikers save Alexander Ruthven among the defenders who desired to speak through the door and said, ‘For God’s sake tell me how my Lord of Gowrie is?’—to which the deponent answered, ‘He is well,’ and the said deponent bade Alexander to go his way, and that he was one fool.”

Then follows the deposition of the man in armour in the turret chamber—

Ramsay said that when he drew his dagger (to stab Ruthven) he had to let go the King’s hawk; and he noticed that the King set his foot on the hawk’s leash, and so kept it till Ramsay could hold it again. One of the King’s followers said that after the King’s cry had been heard from the turret

window "he saw James Erskine lay hands on the Earl of Gowrie upon the High Street, and immediately Sir Thomas Erskine gripped the Earl of Gowrie who ran away from them towards Glenorchy's House and drew forth his two swords and cried, 'I will either be at my own house or die by the gate.'" So he entered the gate, followed by about thirty men. One of his followers named Cranston said he found the Earl struggling at the gate with some of Tullibardine's people and that he relieved him from their hands. People cried out that his brother was slain: coming to the black turnpike, they found him at the foot of the stair. The Earl called out to his followers, "Up the stair." Five of them accompanied him up the black turnpike all with drawn swords. Ascending, they found at the door of the turret chamber, "Herries presenting his sword to stop the entry." Cranston said, "Yail thief, dare thou," and, "Thief, if thou be innocent of yon slaughter, come forth and I shall warrant thee." At the door of the

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turret chamber they were six to three within, who were the King, Ramsay and Erskine. There was some show of fighting between the two parties and one or two were hurt. Here again it was Ramsay's fortune to give the final and effective blow. According to Erskine's account, he "heard Gowrie speak some words at his entry but understands them not. At last Ramsay gave Gowrie one dead stroke, and then Gowrie leaned on his sword and the deponent saw one man hold him up whom he knew not."

This, the great act of the tragedy, which can have lasted only a few minutes, passed unknown to Lennox, Mar and the others who had rushed up the great staircase as we have seen on the first exhibition of the King's face at the turret window. They were met by a strong door which no efforts that they could make with hammers, axes, and a ladder used as a battering-ram could force. The party in the turret from their side heard the cries and the battering at the door without knowing

whether it betokened friends or enemies: the former were the majority, but among them were Eviot, a page, and other followers of Ruthven. The turret party did not know the character of the group till one came round by the black turnpike and told them. To understand the exact position of the two groups it is necessary to remember that the turret chamber, or the "round" as it was termed, was a recess off a larger chamber. Into this larger chamber the black turnpike entered, but between the chamber and the great staircase was the door that defied its assailants from the outside and only gave way when attacked from the inside of the chamber.

There can hardly be named a crime or act of violence as to which there stands on record so minute and full an examination as there is of the Gowrie Conspiracy. Every one who could speak to the facts was examined twice—by the Executive who prepared the case for the Crown, and the Estates who gave judgment on it, and both records are pre-

served. The municipality, at the desire of the King, held a general Court of Enquiry among the whole indwellers in Perth that they might discover all who had anything to say about the event. To these enquiries there are still extant the evidence of 355 persons. The greater portion had nothing to tell. The scattered heap of evidence thus conjured up holds well together and completes a consistent story. While the Gowrie Conspiracy is peculiar in the closeness and clearness by which its external history can be traced, it is equally remarkable for the profound mystery shrouding the ultimate object of those concerned in it. There was a strong party in the country who leaned to the doctrine that Gowrie had got foul play. The theory that the whole was a plot of the Court to ruin the powerful house of Gowrie must at once, after a calm weighing of the evidence, be dismissed as beyond the range of sane conclusions.*

James made his position more ludicrous

* Hill Burton.

and unpleasant by his desperate and hopeless efforts to break the obstinacy of Bruce and those who stood by him. Then came the scene. "The King asked Bruce, 'Now are ye yet persuaded? Ye have heard me, ye have heard my ministers, ye have heard my counsel, ye have heard the Earl of Mar touching the report of this treason: whether are ye yet fully persuaded or not?' 'Surely Sir,' says Bruce, 'I would have further light before I preached it to persuade the people. If I were but a private subject not a pastor I could rest upon your Majesty's report as others do.' Then the King asked Balfour, 'Are ye fully persuaded?' He answered, 'I will speak nothing to the contrary, Sir.' 'But are ye not persuaded?' says the King. 'Not yet, Sir,' said he. Watson answered after the same manner. Balcanqual said that he would affirm all that David Lindsay said from the pulpit in presence of his Majesty yesterday. 'What said Mr. David?' says the King. 'Mr. David founded himself upon your

Majesty's report and a faithful rehearsal of it : and so shall we.' 'Think ye,' says the King, 'that Mr. David doubted my report?' 'No, David was sent from the Continent.' They said unto him, 'Are ye not certainly persuaded of this treason?' 'Yes, sir,' said he, 'I am persuaded in conscience of it.' 'Now,' says the King, 'Mr. Walter, are ye truly persuaded?' 'Indeed, Sir,' said he, 'I would have further time and light.' The King asked John Hall, 'Are ye fully persuaded?' He answered, 'I would have the civil trial going before, Sir, that I may be persuaded.' The King asked Peter Hewat, 'Are ye yet persuaded?' 'Sir,' says he, 'I suspect not your proclamation.'

"In a second interview with Bruce, the King referred to his secretary, Sir Thomas Erskine, to satisfy the obdurate minister about the facts. 'As for Sir Thomas Erskine,' said Bruce, 'I trusted him in a part : but there were other things that I thought hard.' 'What was that?' said the King. 'That part which concerned the Master of Gowrie and your

Majesty.' 'Doubt ye of that?' said the King, 'then you could not but count me a murderer.' 'It followeth not, if it please you, Sir,' said Bruce, 'for ye might have some secret cause.' The King urged him to preach the articles which were sent to him. Bruce said he had given his answer already to those articles, and had offered to the ambassadors that which all men thought satisfactory far more than preaching. 'What is that?' said the King. 'That I will subscribe my resolution,' said Bruce. 'Trust you it,' said the King. 'Yes, Sir,' said Bruce. 'If ye trust it, why may ye not preach it?' said the King. 'I shall tell you, Sir,' said Bruce. 'I give it but a doubtful trust for I learn this out of Bernard—in doubtful things to give undoubted trust is temerity, and in undoubted things to give a doubtful trust is infirmity.' 'But this is undoubted,' said the King. 'Then bear with my infirmity,' said Bruce. 'But ye say it is more than preaching,' said the King. 'Sir, I ought to

preach nothing but the word of God,' said Bruce. 'Obedience to princes, suppose they are wicked, is the word of God,' said the King. 'I will lay a wager that there is no express word of King James VI. in Scripture. Yet, if there be a King, there there is a word for you also.'*

"At a third interview with Bruce, 'Are ye resolved to preach?' said the King. 'I am discharged to preach the pleasures of men,' says Bruce: 'Place me where God placed me and I shall teach fruitful doctrine as God shall give me grace. But we have not that custom to be enjoined to preach, nor I dare not promise to keep that injunction. It lieth not in my hand to make a promise. I know not certainly what God may suffer me to speak. I may stand dumb. Therefore, Sir, leave me free, and when I shall find myself moved by God's Spirit and to have the warrant of His word I shall not fail to do it.' 'That is plain anti-baptistry, that is cabal and

* Burton's History of Scotland.

treason,' said the King. 'Ye shall preach as the rest have done, or else I cannot be satisfied—ye shall go. I will not only have you clearing me, but my whole company,' said the King. 'As for your Majesty's company,' said Bruce, 'they have no need of my clearing, neither will they seek it. I am bound to your Majesty, and I will do all that lieth in my power.' 'Then ye must subscribe my innocence,' said the King. 'Your own conscience, Sir, can do that best,' said Bruce, 'it is very hard for me to do it.' 'Why is it hard?' said the King. 'Had ye a purpose to slay my lord?' said Bruce. 'As I shall answer to God,' said the King, 'I knew not that my lord was slain till I saw him in his last agony and was very sorry and prayed in my heart for the same.' 'What say ye then concerning Mr. Alexander?' said Bruce. 'I grant,' said the King, 'I am art and part of Mr. Alexander's slaughter, for it was in my own defence.' 'Why brought ye him not to justice?' said Bruce, 'seeing ye would have

had God before your eyes?’ ‘I had neither God nor the devil before my eyes, but my own defence,’ said the King. Bruce demanded of the King if he had a purpose that morning to slay Mr. Alexander. The King answered upon his salvation that that morning he loved him as his brother. Bruce by reason of his oaths thought him innocent of any purpose that day in the morning to slay them, yet because he confessed he had not God nor justice before his eyes, but was in a mind to do wrong, he could not be innocent before God and had great cause to repent and to crave mercy for Christ’s sake.” *

Bruce belonged to a distinguished family, the Bruces of Airth, and we cannot disregard his judgment. He was well acquainted with the cunning character of the King.

This eminent historian † makes a strong effort to apologise for and defend the King, “familiarity with his ways and moods will reconcile us to his conduct in this affair.”

* Pitcairn, Criminal Trials. † Hill Burton.

This is an impossibility. We have before us the false narrative drawn up and published by the King, and in addition to that we have sufficient evidence to prove the King's complicity in the conspiracy. There is, for example, the execution of Gowrie's three followers three weeks after the event, probably the only men who could have given incontestable evidence of Gowrie's innocence as they were conversant with all his movements. Their evidence was vital to the case, and under any circumstances would have been impartial, because Gowrie's death would have enabled them to speak independently. Had James been an innocent man the evidence of these three witnesses would have been most important to him, and no execution would have taken place until the case had come up for trial. James not being innocent, the execution of these men was necessary in respect that they would have sworn to Gowrie's movements, and how he was occupied before the conspiracy, all of which was never

afterwards known. Another remarkable feature was the conversation between James and the Rev. Mr. Bruce, so fully given by Burton. Bruce was an eye-witness of the whole circumstances, and he entertained no doubt of the King's guilt. It is evident that no "familiarity with the King's ways" can reconcile us to his conduct. The historian must first bring him out innocent, which he has failed to do. Any appearance of restlessness and excitement on the part of the Ruthvens is pure invention due to the imagination of the historian. The details of the dinner, alleged to have been supplied by Craigengelt, prove nothing, because if the King meant to kill Gowrie he could not expect a dinner to be ready on his arrival; whereas, if Gowrie meant to kill the King, the dinner would in all probability have been ready in order to facilitate the execution of the plot. Assuming the reply of Gowrie to Lennox to be true, that the King "had gone up quietly some quiet errand," that disclosed no information

because the King and Alexander Ruthven admittedly left the dining-room together. Burton really reproduces the substance of the King's narrative as his version of the matter, and on that he forms his judgment, and to that he adds the testimony of Lennox which is in favour of the King. It is not the case that there stands on record a minute and full examination of this plot. It is a one-sided examination that is recorded; and though he says that "everyone who could speak to the facts was examined twice," he admits that "there was a strong party in the country who leaned to the doctrine that Gowrie had got foul play." Burton does not attempt to analyse and discuss the evidence of this "strong party," yet the whole case rests on that evidence. The Town Council were ordered to hold a court of inquiry, which they did, and of 355 persons examined "the greater portion had nothing to tell." Why so is not stated, but the fact is suspicious. The inhabitants were anything

but ignorant of the conspiracy. The whole town turned out on the ringing of the bell and with rage practically mobbed the King. These people, according to the historian, "had nothing to tell." The meaning of that is that they knew all about it shortly after the event, but they refused to get themselves into trouble by giving evidence against the King; they, therefore, resolved to say nothing in the circumstances—a very wise policy. We quite agree with the historian that the conspiracy is "remarkable for the profound mystery shrouding the ultimate object of those concerned in it," but on a calm survey of the circumstances it is impossible to adopt Burton's view and dismiss from our minds the theory "that the whole was a plot of the Court to ruin the House of Gowrie." The historian has failed to make out a case that warrants the conclusion he has arrived at. Undoubtedly, James made his position "ludicrous," as the historian says, by his efforts "to break Bruce's obstinacy." There

was something else than obstinacy in Bruce's case, there was "conviction"; and James certainly made himself ludicrous in trying to remove that. The interview, however, though fully reproduced by Burton, does not convince him of the King's guilt, and, while it is an interview of great importance, and accurately recorded, it will convince most people that Bruce's questions and the King's responses leave an impression wholly unfavourable to the King. The King admitted he killed Ruthven, "I am art and part of Alexander Ruthven's slaughter, for it was in my own defence." We have no proof that the King was "on his own defence" that day—no proof that Ruthven ever attempted to strike him.

The conversation evidently marks the King as untruthful and insincere. The attitude of Bruce does him great credit, particularly the independent way in which he addressed the King, and the firm and unswerving position he maintained during the

entire interview. If there was a conspiracy at Perth against King James, it is necessary to suppose that there were several persons in the plot prepared to support the principal actor. At any rate, it is certain that the people of Perth did on that occasion show strong attachment to the Gowrie family, and by their behaviour expressed a clear opinion that the death of Gowrie and his brother was a cruel murder. One would have imagined that their resentment of the deed would have induced the King to keep at a distance from Perth and to banish all thoughts of it for years to come; but before three months were over, after such a wonderful escape, to find him heaping honours and riches on that very city where such a horrid plot had been contrived, places him on the horns of a dilemma. If we make Gowrie and others at Perth the conspirators, the King's conduct is unnatural and absurd. We are warranted in saying, says a local writer, that Gowrie and his brother did not conspire against the King,

as was affirmed by him, but the King conspired against them and caused their lives to be taken from them.*

A recent writer (Louis A. Barbè) raises a point of considerable importance. He says, and we agree with him, that it is repugnant to common-sense that if the Earl and his brother were planning either the murder or the abduction of James they should retire to the Highlands, making it a matter of difficulty for their supposed accomplices to communicate with them; they allow themselves two days, one of them being a Sunday, for carrying out in Perth the preparation necessary for the success of the undertaking. Gowrie and his brother were in Strathbraan for fifteen days and returned to Perth on 2nd August: Craigenelt was with them. There is evidence that letters passed from James to Gowrie and Ruthven while there, but these have been destroyed.

* History of Perth. Peacock.

CHAPTER IV.

Verdict of the Scottish Parliament—Examination of Witnesses—Mr. Andrew Lang in Blackwood—Tytler's Review—The Logan Letters—Barbè's Criticism.

“THE COURT of Parliament presided over by James VI. shows that John, Earl of Gowrie, and his brother, Alexander Ruthven, committed the crime of treason against our Sovereign Lord and his authority in manner as contained in the summons: and therefore decrees and declares the name, memory and dignity, of John, Earl of Gowrie, and Alexander, his brother, to be extinguished, and their arms to be cancelled, so that their posterity shall be unable and incapable in all time coming to possess or enjoy any offices, dignities, honours, possessions, rights, titles, hope of succession within this nation which in

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any way pertained to John, Earl of Gowrie, and Alexander, his brother, to be confiscated, devolved on our Sovereign Lord, and in all time coming to remain the property of his Majesty for ever. His Majesty and Estates, in detestation of the said horrible, unnatural and vile treason, attempted by the said John, Earl of Gowrie, and Alexander, his brother, against his Highness's own life, decrees and ordains that the bodies of the said traitors shall be carried on Monday next to the public cross of Edinburgh, and there to be hanged, drawn and quartered in presence of the whole people, and thereafter the heads, quarters and carcasses to be affixed to the most public places in Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee and Stirling. And this I give for doom." *

By another Act the surname of Ruthven was to be extinguished and abolished for ever, and such as were innocent were to take other names, and these to be inserted in the public Records.

* State Paper Office.

It will be noticed that this is the Scottish Parliament, an assembly that was entirely controlled by the King. The persistency with which Gowrie is charged as a conspirator, and the extreme cruelty and brutality of the sentence, is an undeniable proof of James's unforgiving and relentless temper, and what is to be said if he was himself the conspirator? Three centuries have passed away and posterity has failed to discover a single crime committed by Gowrie against the King. In the State Paper Office there is little to throw light on the subject, and we therefore conclude that the matter is as we have put it, and that words are not adequate to express disapproval of the King's behaviour. Had Gowrie done anything to offend his Sovereign, history would not have been silent, but the profound silence of history is significant, and appears to us to condemn the King as the author and prime mover of this conspiracy.

The next act of the drama was the

examination of witnesses in order to prove Gowrie's guilt. Under the presidency of the Lord Chancellor, the Court met at Falkland on the 9th August, four days after Gowrie's death. A second Court met there on the 20th August, presided over by the Lord Chancellor. Among the witnesses examined were the Duke of Lennox, Earl of Mar, Andrew Henderson, the Abbot of Inchaffray, Abbot of Lindores, Sir Thomas Erskine, Sir John Ramsay, John Graham of Orchil, John Graham of Balgowan, Andrew Roy, Bailie of Perth, George Hay, Prior of the Charter House, &c. These men were all supporters of the King, and it is not difficult to see what would be the scope of their evidence. Such a volume of depositions against Gowrie would no doubt be intended to influence the people at the time. It is, however, worthless in respect that it is not the testimony of independent men but of mere partizans of the King. On the 22nd September the Town Council also held a Court in order to take some precognitions.

This Court was presided over by the Provost, and was to receive the testimony of the whole inhabitants. None of the witnesses were in Gowrie House, consequently they could only speak to the circumstances from a very general knowledge. Between the death of Gowrie and the meeting of the Town Council an extraordinary event happened, viz., the execution of Gowrie's three confidential friends, Sir Thomas Cranston, George Craigengelt and John MacDuff. This was an act of great significance. It was authorised by the King, and was undoubtedly meant to put out of the way those who could testify to Gowrie's innocence. These men emitted depositions before their death showing that they fought on the side of Gowrie but avoiding all mention of the King. On the 1st November the trial of Gowrie and his brother took place in Edinburgh and their dead bodies were transmitted from Perth and placed at the bar. The trial appears to have been adjourned till the 11th, and on the 15th

sentence as already given was pronounced. On the 19th the dead bodies were hanged, drawn and quartered, the different parts exhibited at Edinburgh, Perth, Dundee and Stirling, and after this diabolical proceeding the wrath of the King was supposed to be appeased. James would doubtless be aware that his relative, the Regent Moray, acted in precisely the same manner in respect of the body of Lord Huntly, and the diabolical deed from constitutional practice would probably to him be bereft of its shocking nature. Though we have a record of the executions of the time there is every probability that a large number of persons were executed of which no record whatever has been handed down to us. The trial of Gowrie was an act that must ever throw a cloud on the memory of the King. Lord Hailes, who also formed his opinion on the King's narrative, informs us * that by an Act of the Privy Council the magistrates and Town Council of Perth were

* Annals III. 374.

summoned to appear before the King on the 16th September, 1600, at Linlithgow, to answer for the contempt and indignity done to his Majesty. That Act makes mention of certain irreverent and undutiful speeches against the King. According to Calderwood, Alexander Ruthven of Freeland, cried up, "Come down, thou son of Signor Davie, thou hast slain an honest man than thyself," and George Craigenfelt and others cried, "Give us our Provost or the King's green coat shall pay for it."

In Blackwood's Magazine for April, 1902, an eminent writer* contributes an article on the Logan Letters, being the result of his investigation of the Earl of Haddington's papers. According to him, No. 4, Logan to Gowrie, is genuine; the others forgeries. With this we do not agree. The orthography and composition of all the five are very similar, and we think it beyond doubt that Sprot, who was apprehended in 1608, wrote the whole. That Sprot stole No. 4 from Bower cannot be

* Mr. Andrew Lang.

proved, and its non-appearance at Sprot's trial is not conclusive proof that it was not forged. "If Mr. Anderson and Mr. Gunter, two very capable experts, consider No. 4 a forgery, we may accept that as final, until conclusive proof of the contrary can be produced, and until then it is unfair to convict Gowrie or Logan with treason." There are no circumstances to fall back upon to warrant this supposition. The confessions of Sprot just before he was executed are worthless, for this among other reasons, that they are unsupported by proof of any kind. If there was any idea of kidnapping James and taking him to Fast Castle we must have other proof than that of a dissolute man like Sprot. If this writer believes No. 4 genuine, why does he say: "When the act of forgery was carried to such a pitch of excellence by a mere drunken body of a country writer, what may not an Edinburgh practitioner have done in the way of forging the letters attributed to Queen Mary." To which we say "yes," yet Mr. Lang accuses

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the Queen ! Sprot had a regular manufactory of sham Logan Letters and other forgeries and he sold them to the debtors to Logan's estate who used them to blackmail Lord Home and the other executors.*

Probably no writer has made such an argumentative effort to convict Gowrie as Tytler has done. He begins with the execution of his father, and makes the most of that : then the religious question : then his life at Padua, during which time James quarrelled with Elizabeth, and Gowrie became her favourite : the correspondence between Colville (a friend of Gowrie's father) and Cecil ; and between James and the Pope, involving a Catholic invasion of England, of which James was a supporter : Nicolson (Elizabeth's Envoy in Scotland), and his correspondence with Cecil on the subject : plot organised in England against James : Bothwell and Gowrie together at Paris in April, 1600. According to Tytler, Gowrie was ambitious and proud,

* Louis A. Barbè.

and when he found that his friends were anxious to place him at the head of the English faction opposed to James was it likely he should decline that pre-eminence? He was animated by a keen desire to avenge his father's death: was it likely that the plot to seize the King's person would not present itself? Then there is the debate in the Estates Convention when James was refused money to provide an army to fight Elizabeth. Tytler says, it is probably from this moment that we may date the actual rise of the Gowrie conspiracy, Elizabeth and James being enemies and Gowrie attached to Elizabeth. Gowrie appears to have devised a plot to decoy the King into his castle of Gowrie; to separate him from his suite and to compel him, by threats of instant death, to agree to be carried on board a boat which should be waiting for the purpose. The Royal prisoner was to be conveyed to an impregnable fortalice (Fast Castle) where, if well victualled, a garrison of ninety men could for months have defied

an army. To administer the government in the Royal name under Gowrie and his faction would then be easy. Four persons were in the plot: Gowrie and his brother, Logan of Restalrig and one unknown. Tytler, without any authority whatever, designates Logan a reckless and unprincipled villain, who had run through a large estate in every kind of dissipation and excess, a mocker of religion and a constant follower of the notorious Bothwell, and drowned in debt. Both mansions, Gowrie House and Fast Castle were from their construction and situation singularly well calculated for an attempt against the King. It is important to observe here that the historian has drawn on the King's narrative and on the forged Logan Letters for his facts and deductions. This being so his entire fabric falls to the ground. We have no proof that Gowrie was connected with any plot in England against James, and that Gowrie was ambitious and proud is the merest conjecture. Gowrie's character was the reverse of this.

His receiving promotion in England had nothing to do with a conspiracy, and as for avenging his father's death, there is no indication on Gowrie's part that he ever at any time contemplated such a thing. The encounter in the Estates Convention might very probably be the origin of the conspiracy as regards James, but not as regards Gowrie. At the Convention, Gowrie denounced in strong terms the extravagant proposal of James for the imposition of a heavy tax to raise money. This attitude would be the result of the huge debt resting owing by the King to Gowrie. The tax would have been a most iniquitous one, and one that few of the people could pay. We have no proof but the King's statement, that Gowrie decoyed the King into Gowrie House. Tytler's reference to Fast Castle and Gowrie administering the government there, and his review of Logan's character, are all too ludicrous for serious consideration.

In the matter of the Logan forged Letters, it is important to observe that they provided

for the King being assassinated at Fast Castle in the County of Berwick, not at Perth, and that correspondence is dated as late as 31st July. The question very naturally arises, how could Gowrie kill the King in Perth, when, by these Letters, he was to be killed at Fast Castle?

Then Tytler proceeds: "It is now time to introduce the reader to the most interesting part of this strange story, the letters of the conspirators themselves. It appears from these documents, which were not discovered until many years after the deep tragedy in which the conspiracy concluded, that early in July, 1600, Gowrie wrote Logan appointing a secret meeting to confer *on the purpose he knew of*. This letter is not now in existence, but it was brief, alluding to what had passed before between them and stating that Logan's absence in Lothian had prevented Gowrie from coming to see him at Fast Castle."

Tytler has nothing to found on for these opinions but the Logan letters, which we reproduce:—

LETTER I.

LOGAN TO THE UNKNOWN CONSPIRATOR.

RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR,—My duty with service remembered. Please you understand my Lord of Go. and some others his lordship's friends and well-wishers, who tender his lordship better preferment, are upon the resolution you know, for the revenge of that cause: and his lordship has written to me anent that purpose: whereto I will accord, in case you will stand to and bear a part: and before ye resolve meet me and Mr. A. R. (Alexander Ruthven) in the Canongate on Tuesday the next week: and be as wary as ye can. Indeed, Mr. A. R. spoke with me four or five days since: and I have promised his lordship an answer within ten days at farthest.

As for the purpose now, Mr. A. R. and I have set down the course; it will be a very easy clever turn, and not far by that form with the like stratagem whereof we had conference in Cap. h. But in case you and Mr.

A. R. foregather, because he is somewhat causety (flighty) for God's sake be very wary with his reckless toys of Padua: for he told me one of the strangest tales of a nobleman of Padua that ever I heard in my life resembling the like purpose.

Always to our purpose I think it best for our plot that we meet all at my house of Fast Castle: for I have concluded with Mr. A. R. how I think it shall be metest to be conveyed quietest in a boat by sea: at which time upon sure advertisement I shall have the place very quiet and well provided. And as I receive your answer I will post this bearer to my lord. And therefore I pray you as you love your own life, as it is not a matter of mowise (mummery), be circumspect in all things and take no fear but all shall be well. When you have read, send this letter back again with the bearer that I may see it burnt myself: for so is the fashion in such errands: and if you please write your answer on the back hereof, in case ye will take my word for the credit of the bearer. And use all expedition, for the time would not be long delayed. Ye know the King's hunting will

be shortly: and then shall be the best time as Mr. A. R. has assured me that my lord has resolved to enterprise this matter.

FAST CASTLE,
July 18, 1600.

LETTER II.

LOGAN TO LAIRD BOWER.

LAIRD BOWER,—I pray you haste you fast to me about the errand I told you and we shall confer at length on all things. I have received a new letter from my Lord of Go. concerning the purpose that M. A., his lordship's brother, spake to me before: and I perceive I may have advantage of Dirleton in case his other matter take effect as we hope it shall. Always I beseech you be at one the morn at even: for I have assured his lordship's servant that I shall send you over the water within three days with a full resolution of all my will anent all purposes. As I shall indeed recommend you and your trustiness to his lordship, ye shall find an honest recompense for your pains in the end. I care not for all the land I have in this kingdom in

case I get a grip at Dirleton: for I esteem it the pleasantest dwelling in Scotland. For God's cause keep all things very secret that my lord my brother get no knowledge of our purposes, for I would rather be eirdit quick (buried alive).

CANONGATE OF EDINBURGH,
July 18, 1600.

LETTER III.

LOGAN TO THE UNKNOWN CONSPIRATOR.

RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR,—All my hartly duty with humble service remembered. Since I have taken in hand the enterprise with my Lo. of Go. your special and only best beloved, as we have set down the plot already, I will request you that ye will be very circumspect and wise that no man get an advantage of us. I doubt not but ye know the peril to be both life, land and honour, in case the matter be not wisely used, and for my own part I shall have a special respect to my promise that I have made to his Lo. and M. A., his Lo. brother, although the scaffold were set up! If I cannot win to Falkland

the first night I shall be timely in St. Johnstoun in the morn. Indeed I lippened for my Lo. himself, or else M. A., his Lo. brother, at my house of Fastcastle, as I wrote to them both. Always I repose on your advertisement of the precise day with credit to the bearer: for howbeit he be but a silly, auld, gleid, carle, I will answer for him that he shall be very true.

I pray you, Sir, read and either burn or send again with the bearer: for I dare hazard my life and all I have else in the world on his message. I have such proof of his constant truth. So commits you to Christ's holy protection.

CANONGATE OF EDINBURGH,

July 27, 1600.

LETTER IV.

LOGAN TO EARL OF GOWRIE.

MY LO.,—My most humble duty, &c. At the receipt of your Lo. letter I am so comforted, especially at your Lo. purpose communicated to me therein that I can neither utter my joy, nor find myself suffi-

ciently able to requite your Lo. with due thanks. Indeed, my Lord, at my being last in the town, M. A., your Lo. brother, imparted somewhat of your Lo. intention anent that matter unto me: and if I had not been busied about some turns of my own I thought to come over to S. Jo. and spoken with your Lo. Yet always, my Lo., I beseech your Lo. both for the safety of your honour, credit, and more than that, your life, my life, and the lives of many others, who may perhaps innocently smart for that turn afterwards in case it be revealed by any: and likewise the utter wrecking of our lands and houses and extirpating of our names: look that we be all as sure as your Lo.: and I myself shall be for my own part: and then I doubt not but with God's grace we shall bring our matter to a fine which shall bring contentment to us all that was wished for the revenge of the Maschivalent massacring of our dearest friends.

I doubt not but M. A., your Lo. brother, has informed your Lo. what course I laid down to bring all your Lo. associates to my house of Fast Castle by sea, where I should

have all materials in readiness for their safe receiving on land, and with my house making as it were but a matter of pastime in a boat on the sea in this fair summer tide: and none other strangers to haunt my house while we had concluded on the laying of our plot which is already devised by Mr. Alexander and me. And I would wish that your lordship would either come or send Mr. A. to me; and thereafter I should meet your Lo. in Leith or quietly in Restalrig, where we should have preferred a fine *hattit kit* with sugar comfits and wine and thereafter confer on matters: and the sooner we brought our purpose to pass it were the better, before harvest. Let not M. W. R., your old pedagogue, ken of your coming: but rather would I, if I dare be so bold to entreat your Lo., once to come and see my own house where I have kept my Lo. Bo. (Bothwell) in his greatest extremities, say the K. and his Council what they would. And in case God grant us a happy success in this errand I hope both to have your Lo. and his Lo. with many others of your lovers and his at a good dinner before I die. Always I hope that the

King's buck-hunting at Falkland this year shall prepare some dainty cheer for us against that dinner the next year. *Hoc jocose* to animate your Lo. at this time: but afterwards we shall have better occasion to be merry.

I protest, my Lo., before God, I wish nothing with a better heart nor to achieve to that which your Lo. would fain attain unto: and my continual prayer shall tend to that effect: and with the large spending of my lands, goods, yea, the hazard of my life, shall not affright me from that, although the scaffold were directly set up, before I should falsify my promise to your Lo. and persuade your Lo. thereof. I trow your Lo. has a proof of my constancy ere now.

But, my Lo., whereas your Lo. desires in my letter that I crave, my Lo. my brother's mind anent this matter: I collaterly dissent from that that he should ever be a councillor thereto: for in good faith he will never help his friend nor harm his foe. Your Lo. may confide more in this old man, the bearer hereof, my man Laird Bower, nor in my brother: for I lippen my life and all I have else, in his hands: and I trow he would not

spare to ride to hell's yett to pleasure me :
and he is not beguiled of my part to him.
Always, my Lo., when your Lo. has read my
letter deliver it to the bearer again, that I
may see it burnt with my ain een : and I
have sent your Lo. letter to your Lo. again :
for so is the fashion I grant : and I pray your
Lo. rest fully persuaded of me and of all that
I have promised : for I am resolved how be
it I were to die the morn, I man entreat your
Lo. to expedie Bower, and give him strait
direction on pain of his life, that he take
never a wink of sleep until he see me again or
else he will utterly undo us. I have already
sent another letter to the gentleman your Lo.
kens, as the bearer will inform your Lo. of his
answer and forwardness with your Lo : and I
shall show your Lo. farther at meeting when
and where your Lo. shall think metest. To
which time and ever commits your Lo. to the
protection of Almighty God.

GUNNISGREEN,

July 29, 1600.

Your Lo. own sworn and bound man to obey and serve
With true and ever ready service to his utter power to
his life's end.

RESTALRIG.

Prays your Lo. hold me excused for my unseemly letter which is not so well written as need were: for I durst not let any of my writers ken of it but took two sundry idle days to do it myself. I will never forget the good sport that M. A., your Lo. brother, told me of a nobleman of Padua: it comes so oft to my memory: and indeed it is *à propos* to this purpose we have in hand.

LETTER V.

LOGAN TO THE UNKNOWN CONSPIRATOR.

RIGHT HONOURABLE SIR,—My hartly duty remembered. Ye know I told you at our last meeting in the Canongate that M. A. R., my Lord of Gowrie's brother, had spoken with me anent the matter of our conclusion: and for my own part I shall not be hindmost. And since then I got a letter fra his lordship's self for the same purpose: and upon the receipt thereof, understanding his lordship's frankness and forwardness in it, God kens if my heart was not lifted ten

degrees. I posted this same bearer till his lordship to whom, you may concredit all your heart in that as well as I: for even it were my very soul I durst make him messenger thereof. I have sic experience of his truth in many other things. He is a silly, auld gleid, carle but wondrous honest. And as he has reported to me his lordship's answer, I think all matters shall be concluded at my house of Fast Castle: for I and M. A. R. concluded that you should come with him and his lordship, and any ane other man with you, being but only four in company intil one of the great fishing boats by sea to my house: where ye shall land as safely as on Leith-shore. And the house again his lordship's coming to be quiet: and when you are about half a mile from shore to gar set forth a signal. But for God's sake let neither any knowledge come to my lord my brother's ears, nor yet to M. W. R., my lordship's auld pedagogue: for my brother is kettle to shoe behind (not to be trusted) and dare not enterprise for fear: and the other will dissuade us from our purpose with reason of religion, which I can never abide. I think there is none of a noble heart as carries a

stomach worth a penny but they would be glad to see a contented revenge of Grey Steil's death. And the sooner the better, or else we may be marred and frustrated: and therefore pray his lordship be quick. And till M. A. remembers the sport he tells us of Padua: for I think with myself that the cogitation in that should stimulate his lordship. And for God's cause use all your courses *cum discretione*. Fail not, Sir, to send back again this letter, for M. A. learnt me that fashion that I may see it destroyed myself. So till your coming and ever commits you heartily to Christ's holy protection.

GUNNISGREEN,

July 31, 1600.

THE LOGAN LETTERS.

These Letters have always formed an essential element in the argument of those who defend the King, as, were they genuine, they would prove that the conspiracy was directed against him by Gowrie and his

followers. One of the greatest champions of the Letters, as we have seen, is the historian Tytler. It never seems to have occurred to him that they were forgeries. This is incredible in a writer of his great experience, and still more incredible that his criticism is expressed with absolute certainty and destitute of the shadow of a doubt. What he says is this: These letters explain themselves: their import cannot be mistaken: their authenticity—since the recent discovery of the originals—cannot be questioned. They still exist (in Register House, Edinburgh), and they establish the reality of the conspiracy beyond the possibility of doubt. The first proves that Alexander Ruthven and Logan had set down this plot for the preferment of Gowrie and the revenge of his father's death: that the conspirators were to meet at Fast Castle, and that they had fixed the King's hunting as the most favourable time for the attempt. In the second letter to Bower we have a glance at the rich bribe by which Gowrie had secured the

assistance of Logan—the estate of Dirleton: and in the third his resolution to keep his promise, although the scaffold were set up, with his expectation to have speedy intimation of the precise day when the attempt was to be made at St. Johnstoun. Logan's letter to Gowrie is still more minute. It contains the determination to revenge the massacre of their dearest friends: the intended rendezvous of the associates at Fast Castle: the good cheer and happy success which the King's buck-hunting was to bring them: the solemn injunctions to secrecy, life and lands, name and fame hanging on the issue: the necessity of destroying their letters. In Logan's last letter to the "unknown conspirator" we have the directions how the signal is to be given at sea: the last consultation at Fast Castle: Logan's exhortation to be speedy and his anticipation of a glorious revenge for the death of "Grey Steil" (the nickname of Gowrie's father). All this is so clearly established by the correspondence, and so completely proves the existence

of Gowrie's plot, that he who doubts must be too desperate in his scepticism to be reached by any evidence whatever.*

This criticism is unwarrantable, even were the letters genuine, because under any circumstances they were open to doubt even when Tytler wrote. The forgeries and the ridiculous composition of them, one would think, are too transparent to mislead, and it is curious that Tytler with his critical eye did not discover this. Indeed the composition is so incoherent as to border on the imbecile, unless they were written, which is not improbable, when Sprot was under the influence of liquor and palmed off on posterity, as if actually written by Robert Logan of Restalrig. There is no letter from Gowrie—a conspicuous oversight on the part of the forger. The one he is alleged to have written does not exist—a circumstance of great suspicion; and Tytler in his simplicity endeavours to give us the contents of it, which of course is the

* Tytler's History of Scotland.

merest conjecture. As a matter of fact we do not believe there ever was such a letter, so that Tytler's efforts to whitewash the King are unavailing. The opening words of the first letter are characteristic. "My Lord of Go." is a phrase that will not be found anywhere else. The "toys of Padua" are mixed up with Alexander Ruthven instead of his brother. The suggestion to meet at Fast Castle is very cunning and a mere trap to throw suspicion on Gowrie. We have no evidence that any meeting of the kind ever took place. The next sentence is an effort to incriminate the Ruthvens—"Be circumspect and all shall be well." The writer expected the conspiracy to succeed against the King. This letter, as well as the others, was to be burned or returned to be burned. "My Lord is to enterprise the matter." The suggestion of caution here is highly absurd. The second letter again refers to "My Lord of Go." and the "errand" and the "purpose," mean conspiracy, the forger being nothing if not mysterious. The point

of the letter is Logan's acquisition of Dirleton, one of Gowrie's estates. Logan wants a grip of Dirleton, "the pleasantest dwelling in Scotland: for God's sake keep all things secret." There is a dash of humour about this, when we consider that Logan knew nothing about it. In the third letter we have the familiar expression: "My Lo. of Go.," "My Lo. and M. A. his Lo. brother." The "unknown conspirator" is commanded to be very "circumspect," but the writer will keep his promise as regards the enterprise "though the scaffold be set up." The Ruthvens were invited to Fast Castle, but we are not told if they went, simply that the bearer was a "silly auld carle," and the writer closes by committing the "unknown conspirator" to "Christ's holy protection." Altogether this letter may be regarded as a huge joke. The fourth letter is the only one addressed to Gowrie, and, according to a recent writer,* is not forged. This writer is mistaken. The letters are all

* Andrew Lang.

written by one and the same hand, a fact which will be apparent to any one who compares critically the composition. This letter begins with "My Lo." and goes on to speak of "Your Lo.," "Your Lo. brother," "S. Jo." (St. Johnstoun). Yet always "My Lo. I beseech your Lo.," "With God's grace we shall bring our matter to a fine which shall content them that wished the revenge of the 'Maschivalent' massacring of our dearest friends." This is a reference to Gowrie's father. Then there is a reference to the plot "which is already devised," and a meeting to take place at Leith or Restalrig where "a fatted kit and sugar comfits and wine" would be prepared. This was not very like negotiating a gigantic conspiracy. "I have left my Lo. Bo." (Bothwell). "I hope both to have your Lo. and his Lo. with many others at a good dinner." In the next sentence the writer "wishes nothing with a better heart" than the conspiracy. Then we are again told that "nothing shall affright me from that though

the scaffold were set up." "But my Lo., wherever your Lo. desires that I crave my Lo." Laird Bower would "ride to hell's yett to pleasure me." That this letter was written by the same hand as the others is evident. The fifth letter is to the "unknown conspirator," where the conspiracy is referred to as the "matter of our conclusion." Bower, the bearer of this letter, is called a "silly auld carle but wondrous honest." The writer orders the conspirators when coming to Fast Castle to hoist a signal. No knowledge of this meeting "to come to my brother's ears nor to W. R. the auld pedagogue." My brother "is kettle to sleve behind." Then the finale, "There is who carries a stomach worth a penny but would be glad to see a contented revenge of Grey Steil's death."

In connection with the Logan Letters it is important to notice the statement made by Coupar in James Logan's paper (p. 85). We would infer that Coupar was aware of the existence of these forged letters or he would

not refer to the correspondence with Robert Logan up to 31st July. Whether Coupar was an accomplice with Sprot in this forgery is another question: all we can say is that his tale as reproduced by James Logan places him in a very compromising position. An intelligent modern writer* who has studied the subject with care and deliberation, says: "With regard to this Sprot, the general belief has hitherto been that, after his apprehension, he confessed not only to his knowledge of a conspiracy, in which the Ruthvens and one Logan of Restalrig were engaged, but also to the possession of a letter written by Restalrig, and containing important details as to the alleged plot; that he subsequently retracted his admission; that he again asserted the truth of his original statement; and that his last words on the scaffold were a final confirmation of his former depositions concerning his knowledge of Restalrig's complicity with Gowrie.

* Louis A. Barbè.

“These were recognised facts. Had they stood alone they might have been looked upon as important evidence in support of the charge of conspiracy against the Ruthvens. But here a damning circumstance arose. No letter was known to have been produced at Sprot’s trial, and this glaring omission naturally begot further incredulity and suspicion ; so that, according to Calderwood, a contemporary writer, ‘so many as did not believe before were never a whit the more persuaded.’ It is true that, in the following year, when the mouldering bones of Restalrig, whose estate was well worth confiscating, were brought to the Bar, the Crown lawyers put in, not one letter, but five, in proof of his treasonable connection with the Earl of Gowrie. All the parties directly concerned being dead, the only evidence of genuineness was supplied by a number of witnesses, who swore to their belief that the five letters were in Logan’s hand-writing. Still, the sceptical remained unconvinced ; and from that

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day to this the view that the documents were forged has always had strenuous supporters."

To enable the reader to grasp the situation it will be necessary to give Sprot's indictment, which is a most elaborate and curiously constructed document.

CHAPTER V.

Sprot's Indictment and Sentence—Concluding Remarks
and Summary of the Case.

GEORGE SPROT, notary in Eyemouth, ye are indicted and accused for as much as John, some time Earl of Gowrie, having most cruelly, detestably, and treasonably, conspired in the month of July in the year of God, 1600, to murder our dear and most gracious sovereign the King's most excellent Majesty, and having imparted that devilish purpose to Robert Logan of Restalrig, who allowed of the same and most willingly and readily undertook to be partaker thereof, the same coming to your knowledge at the time and in manner after specified, ye most unnaturally, maliciously, and treasonably, concealed the same and was art and part thereof. In the

said month of July, in the year of God, 1600, after ye had perceived and known that divers letters and messages had passed between the said Earl of Gowrie and the said Laird of Restalrig, ye being at the place of Fast Castle, ye saw and read the beginning of a letter written with the said Robert Logan of Restalrig's own hand to John Earl of Gowrie as follows :—

“MY LORD,—My most humble duty, &c. At the receipt of your lordship's letters I am so comforted that I can neither utter my joy nor find myself sufficiently able to requite your lordship with due thanks and persuade you in this matter. I shall be always careful for your lordship's honour as if it were my own cause, and I think there is no living Christian that would not be content to revenge the Machiavellian massacre of our dear friends—yea, it should be to venture and hazard life, lands, and all other things, else my heart can bind me to take part in that

matter as you shall find better proof thereof. But one thing would be clear that your lordship should be circumspect and be earnest with your brother that he be not rash in any speeches touching the purpose of Padua."

And a certain time after the execution of the foresaid treason the said Robert Logan having desired Laird Bower to deliver to him the foresaid letter or else burn it, and Bower having given to you all tickets and letters which he then had concerning Restalrig or others, to send the same because he could not read himself, ye abstracted the above written letter and retained the same in your own hands and divers times read it condemning further in substance what is formally set down according to your words, as follows:—

MY LORD,—Ye may easily understand that such a purpose as your Lordship intends cannot be done rashly but with deliberation, and I think for myself it were most meet to

have the men your lordship spoke of ready in a boat or bark and address them as they were taking pastime upon ye in such fair summer time, and if your lordship could think good to come yourself to my house of Fast Castle by sea or send your lordship's brother. I should have the place very quiet and well provided after your lordship's advertisement, and persuade your lordship ye will be as sure and quiet here when we had settled our plot as if ye were in your own chamber, for I am assured we shall hear word within a few days from them your lordship knows of, for I am careful to see what ships come by. Your lordship knows I have kept my lord Bothwell quietly in this house in his great extremities, say the King and Council what they like. And I hope if all things come to pass, as I trust they shall, to have both your lordship and his lordship at a good dinner before I die, *et hoc jocose*, to animate your lordship. And don't doubt, my lord, but all things shall be well, and I am resolved whereof your

lordship shall not doubt of anything on my part, yea, to peril life, land, honor and goods, yea, the hazard of hell shall not restrain me from that yea though if the scaffold were already set up. The sooner the matter is done it will be the better, for the King's buck-hunting will be short, and I hope it shall prepare some dainty cheer for us to dine again the next year. I remember well, my lord, and I will never forget so long as I live that merry sport your lordship's brother told me of a nobleman at Padua, for I think that important to this purpose. My Lord, think nothing that I commit the secrecy hereof and credit to the bearer, for I dare not only venture my life, land, and everything I have in his credit, but I durst hazard my soul in his keeping if it were possible in earthly men, for I am so persuaded of his truth and fidelity, and I trow as your lordship may ask him if it be true he would ride to hell's gates for me. And he is not "begyht" of my part to him, and therefore I don't

know but yet will persuade your lordship to give him trust in this matter as to myself. But I pray your lordship direct him home with all possible haste and give straight command that he take not one wink sleep till he see me again after he comes from your lordship. And, my Lord, as your lordship desires in your letter to me, either rive and burn, or else send back again with the bearer, for so is the fashion I grant.

Which letter written every word by the said Robert Logan, his own hand, was subscribed by him after his accustomed manner with this word :

RESTALRIG.

And albeit the contents of the foresaid letter, you knew perfectly the truth of the said most treasonable conspiracy, and the said Robert Logan of Restalrig, his foreknowledge, allowance and guiltiness thereof, like as ye were assured thereof by his receiving of diverse letters sent to Gowrie for the said

purpose and by sundry conferences between the said James Bower, also called Laird Bower, in your presence and hearing concerning the said treason, as well in the said month of July immediately preceding the said treason, or at divers other times shortly thereafter, as likewise by the revealing thereof to you by the said James Bower, also Laird Bower, who was upon the knowledge and device of the said treason, and was employed as ordinary messenger by the said Robert Logan of Restalrig, to the said Earl of Gowrie, in the traffic of the said damnable treason, whereby your knowledge concealing, and guiltiness of the said treason was undeniable, yet for further manifestation thereof about Yule in the year of God, 1602, the said Robert Logan of Restalrig showed to you that Bower had told him that he had been somewhat rash to let you see a letter which came from the Earl of Gowrie to Robert Logan, who then urged you to tell what you understood by that letter. Ye answered that

ye took the meaning of it to be that he had been on the purpose and Counsel of Gowrie's Conspiracy. He answered you that whatever he had done was his own doing, but if ye would swear to him that you would not reveal anything to any person he should be the best sight (friend) that ever you saw. And in token of further recompense he then gave you £12 in silver. Nevertheless ye perfectly knew the whole circumstances and progress of his said treason from the beginning thereof as well by your knowledge of the said letters as by your conferences with the said James Bower and Robert Logan : yet during all the days of the lifetime of the said Robert Logan and James Bower, who both lived until the year of God 1606, you knew your guiltiness of the treasonable conspiracy aforesaid and most treasonably concealed the same. And so ye were and are art and part of the said most heinous, detestable, and treasonable conspiracy. And therefore ye ought and should incur, underlie and suffer, the sentence and

pain of high treason. Ye have not only by your depositions solemnly made and subscribed with your own hand in presence of many of the Lords of His Majesty's Council and of the Ministers of this town, of date the 15th and 16th of July last and the 10th August confessed every point and article of the indictment: but also by divers other depositions subscribed with your own hand ye have ratified the same and sworn to abide thereat and to seal the same with your blood, which you cannot deny.

The indictment being read before the Court, the said George Sprot of new again confessed the same in every point thereof to be true and of verity.

The said assize having with great deliberation gravely considered the tenor and whole circumstances of the indictment and judicial confession thereof by the panel in presence of the justices and assessors, and thereafter in presence of the assessors themselves, they all

voted upon the whole tenor of the said indictment, and being rightly and well advised, they with one voice by the mouth of Herbert Maxwell, Chancellor, found, pronounced and declared the said George Sprot according to his own confession to be fully culpable art and part of the said most heinous detestable and treasonable conspiracy as contained in the indictment above written and of the knowledge and concealing thereof.

SENTENCE.

The Judge ordains the said George Sprot to be taken to the Mercat Cross of Edinburgh, there to be hanged till he is dead, and thereafter his head to be stricken from his body, and his body to be quartered and demeaned as a traitor, his head to be put on the Tolbooth, and his lands and possessions forfeited to the King as being art and part in the treasonable and detestable crimes specified

and in the concealing thereof: which is pronounced for doom.*

CONCLUSION.

In reviewing the Gowrie Conspiracy, we are met at the threshold with the impossibility of reconciling the official narrative with the testimony of men whose word cannot be called in question.

It will be observed from the first of the papers we have reproduced that Alexander Ruthven was commanded by the King to attend him at Falkland on that fatal 5th of August, a day that Gowrie and Ruthven had, it is said, appointed to go to Dirleton. The King evidently was not invited to Gowrie House, and this is an important point in the case; he volunteered his visit. What took

* From a paper in the archives of the Perth Literary and Antiquarian Society entitled, "Full Extract of Record of Justiciary trial of George Sprot, August 12, 1608, for art and part in the Gowrie Conspiracy."

place on this memorable occasion before the dinner is not recorded. Of what took place during and after the dinner we have more than one version. The official narrative, which unfortunately is untrustworthy, points out that some time after the King sat down to dinner Gowrie sent for Henderson, and told him "to go to his brother in the gallery. He obeyed, and was joined by Gowrie. They locked Henderson up in the chamber. Gowrie then returned to the King, but afterwards left him to join Lennox and his companions. Ruthven, the moment the King was alone, whispered to him that now was the time to go. The King asked him to take Erskine, but he evaded the question. Ruthven locked the doors as they passed out." How does the first of these four writers* put this? "Gowrie's domestics were bribed. The King after dining was to affect a necessity for retiring to a private apartment, and was to take with him one of the devoted brothers."

* James Scott's paper, already quoted *in extenso*.

The writer of the second paper * says, "When Gowrie had gone to the next room, the King said that Alexander Ruthven had suggested that now was the proper time to go and examine the monk." This writer adds, "Ruthven making the King to swear that in his absence he would not move nor call for assistance; of his going to advise with the Earl, his brother, and on his return saying there was no help, he must die, have been considered as having no other support but the King's assertion." And the official record goes on to say, "Gowrie, armed with a sword in each hand, rushed along the gallery followed by seven of his servants with drawn swords. He had seen the bleeding body of his brother. He attacked Erskine and his three companions, who were all wounded, but fought with determined energy." This is an unsupported statement of the King, and is evidently a mere flourish of the pen. If Gowrie and his seven followers fought with

* Alexander Duff.

determined energy and wounded Erskine and his three companions, we should have heard of such an incident from one or other of the many writers who have studied this subject. But all are silent. The King's object was to divert suspicion from himself and convey the idea that this was part of Gowrie's plot for his assassination, and to prevent any one contradicting this falsehood, he promptly executed such of Gowrie's followers as witnessed the deed.

The question naturally arises, Why was the King taken to the turret chamber at all? if he was taken there, as the official narrative states. It was no doubt part of the plot that he should find his way to this chamber in order to draw Ruthven into a compromising position and create the impression that he and not the King was the conspirator. When the King put his head out of the window and called for help, the official narrative would make us believe that he was at that moment wrestling with Ruthven between life and

death. Nothing could be more absurd, as no such thing occurred. There was no reason for Ruthven wrestling with the King. It is much more probable that the King attempted to drag Ruthven to the window but failed. Ruthven and his brother were friendly with James, and there is nothing on record to show that they ever resiled or attempted to resile from that position. Up to the time James appeared at the window Gowrie, who was downstairs, was unarmed. To find a sword he had actually to go to a neighbour and borrow one. Is it to be supposed that if he was the conspirator he would have been at so critical a moment in an unarmed and defenceless position? Being eventually armed with two swords he went direct to the turret chamber, and his first question—most significant in the circumstances—was, “Where is the King: I come to defend him.” As James was incapable of carrying out the plot single-handed, he had a staff of accomplices, of whom Erskine, Ramsay and Herries were the leaders,

and were then in the turret chamber. These were the men who actually killed the Ruthvens under instructions, it is supposed, from the King. When Gowrie reached the turret chamber and was told the King was slain he stood aghast, reversing his sword, saying, "Wae's me, has the King been killed in my house?" These were not the words of a conspirator. In this attitude Ramsay, with unspeakable brutality, and without the slightest provocation, struck him down mortally with his dagger.

A prominent feature, and one that cannot be overlooked, is the prompt disapproval of the King's conduct by the inhabitants of Perth, which showed itself on the very day of the commission of the crime. The high character of Gowrie and his brother seems to have been regarded by them as unassailable and above suspicion. But for the King's superior forces a riot would undoubtedly have taken place. This fact is significant, as is also the fact that those who suspected Gowrie

were in the King's service and receiving the King's pay. The writer of the third paper* says, "The inhabitants of Perth were in the highest degree exasperated at the death of their Provost. They would not listen to the charge of treason against him, and had the King departed from Gowrie House before night the consequences would have been fatal." The writer of the second paper† speaks with no uncertain sound on this point: "The inhabitants of Perth were exasperated beyond measure and threatened to kill the King and all his attendants. After all, the King's supporters could do nothing to allay the fury of the enraged multitude, they found it advisable to keep themselves within doors till daylight was gone and then slip away in the dark. Gowrie and his brother did not conspire against the King, as was affirmed by him, but the King conspired against them. Unfortunate Gowrie, thou hast been cruelly slaughtered." And the writer

* James Logan.

† Alexander Duff.

of the fourth paper* eloquently winds up: "In what estimation can we hold a man who, having perpetrated a crime, the most atrocious within the realm of man, instantly goes as it were before his Maker and declares himself perfectly innocent. How contemptible must his character have appeared to those of his accomplices who were in the secret."

An important statement is made by the first writer† that when the Royal suite was assembled in the street in front of Gowrie House to follow their master to Falkland, the King was to give the alarm that his life was in danger. His confidential servants were to ascend by a private staircase and kill the brother. They were next to kill Gowrie when he came armed. This is a statement of great importance, coming as it does from a writer who, probably more than any man, has studied and written elaborately on the history and antiquities of Perth, and whose accuracy has never been questioned.

* William Panton.

† James Scott.

There are some notable points in the second paper written by Alexander Duff. He says Gowrie was attending a marriage when the King arrived, and was so much concerned about a dinner for him that the wedding dinner was at once offered him for the King's use. It is impossible to verify this statement, but if true it is another proof of Gowrie's innocence. Had he been connected with the conspiracy, or had he even known of it, he was not likely to have gone to a marriage on the very day it was to be carried out. It has been suggested that the separation of the brothers was part of a prearranged scheme as a stratagem that would more easily effect their assassination. The idea, if true, was ingenious, and does credit to the villainy of those concerned. The magnitude of this event has never been sufficiently recognised by the Scottish people, and the reason is that the fictitious narrative of James has misled posterity and induced them to recognise that the Ruthvens were the conspirators.

It says much for the magistrates of Perth that they were unconnected with the plot and knew nothing of it till the alarm was given that Gowrie was killed. On this they hastened to the spot and were very much concerned and disheartened to find that their much respected Provost was no more. The tumult became so serious, and the impression prevailing that the King was implicated, raised the violence of the mob to such a degree, that it is recorded that the King had to take refuge for his own safety. Had the conspiracy been headed by Gowrie, or had the King escaped from assassination, this tumult would not have occurred. It is significant that it did occur, for it is added that the King did not attempt to return to Falkland until the darkness had set in and he would be safe from personal violence.

James was a one-eyed man. In his administration he could see nothing but his own aggrandisement. He was jealous, weak-minded, vindictive, with much of the school-

boy element inherited from his father. He was all his life what one might call a "big boy," but he knew he was a King and he made every one about him obedient to his will or take the consequences. Gowrie was in every respect a greater favourite than James. Even at the English Court he was esteemed by all, including Elizabeth herself; and as he gained in popularity, the breach between Elizabeth and James gradually became wider. It is reasonable to suppose that a man of the temperament of James, finding one of his subjects completely overshadowing him, would feel more than chagrined, he would feel desperate. Gowrie was entertained by Elizabeth for two months and he found the English Court very congenial to him. When he arrived in Edinburgh from England (three months before the conspiracy) his enthusiastic reception by the nobility and people was quite extraordinary. James was an onlooker. He could not but see that he was relegated to a back seat, and that the eyes of his subjects

were directed to this young nobleman, believing, no doubt, that it was only a question of time until he should become James's principal Secretary of State and *ipso facto* governor of the realm. Immediately after the conspiracy the relations between Elizabeth and James began to be less strained, Gowrie being out of the way. Elizabeth, who was an accomplished dissembler, threw aside her interest in Gowrie, congratulated James because Gowrie was removed, having, as she said, "1000 spirits with him, she believed there would be few left in hell." This speech indicates no strained relations. The formation of the conspiracy with all its secret negotiations has been studiously kept in the dark. That it involved much correspondence and much secret negotiation is beyond doubt, but all correspondence has evidently been carefully destroyed, for there is nothing in the State Paper offices, either for or against, that is of any value. The Logan Letters we may dismiss as pure inventions, and we have then nothing to fall

back upon on which to form judgment save the attitude of the King and his Court at and after the event. This brought out unmistakably the suspicions of a portion of the clergy—those who refused to offer up prayers for the King's deliverance. In taking up this position these men cannot be too highly commended. They knew they were hazarding not only their lives but their livings, while their determination for the discovery of truth would not allow them to perjure themselves by becoming hypocrites. They realised that the subject was surrounded with great delicacy on account of the King's connection with it, and they therefore abstained from entering into details. This would lead us to believe that the plot for Gowrie's death was known to a limited extent before it was carried out, yet it is beyond doubt that the magistrates of Perth, with the exception of Bailie Roy, a creature of the conspirators, knew nothing whatever about it. Roy was present at the conspiracy, was an interested looker-on, knew

the circumstances, was examined afterwards, perjured himself, and on oath swore against Gowrie. Whether he did this for a consideration is not recorded. Another noticeable element in the case is the disposal of the King's retinue on that fatal day. Gowrie House, from its construction and extent, offered great facilities for a deed of this description. The retaining wall in front was a splendid barricade for the protection of those within, while the courtyard behind was spacious and capable of holding about 500 men. The Earl of Mar and others placed themselves in front of the retaining wall and in front of the house so as to keep order, while the numerous retinue in the courtyard kept guard there. All this was undoubtedly part of the scheme, as was also the false intimation, to mislead the public shortly after the event, that the King had gone off to Falkland.

Great sensation was created by this unexpected occurrence, and the magistrates of Perth, realising that public attention in Scot-

land and at the English Court was directed to them, felt that their position was one of great anxiety and responsibility. What were they to do? They were not, according to the laws of the realm, able to act independently of the King. They summoned, by the King's instructions, a Court for the examination of witnesses—bribed witnesses we may be sure. The result was that every man who went there gave testimony against Gowrie and in favour of the King. Nothing else could be expected. Evidence against the King would have meant the scaffold; and such depositions as were taken may therefore be dismissed as worthless. The tactics of the King remind us of the murder of Darnley. On that occasion the Queen's ministers committed the murder, and immediately afterwards tried and acquitted Bothwell, the chief actor, and posed before the public as innocent persons. On this occasion the King's ministers, but assisted by the King, murdered Gowrie, and by bogus depositions also posed before the public as

innocent persons. Ruthven was champion of the one and his grandson victim of the other. The Town Council, as we have said, were not free agents in the matter. We are, therefore, indebted principally to those brave and valiant ministers who had the moral courage to speak out under circumstances of great peril. There is another point which should not escape notice, viz., at the moment when Gowrie was struck down the King was playing with a hawk in the adjoining room. If anything were wanted to prove the guilt of the King this incident would compromise him. Is it likely that he would have been engaged at so critical a moment in such a frivolous occupation if he had been the victim of the conspiracy? Assuming that he was the leader, such an occupation at that exciting moment was simply grotesque.

In the whole course of Scottish history this deed must be regarded as one of the most extraordinary and mysterious of events. Its inspiration, its secrecy, the profound silence of

those connected with it, and the issue of the so-called official narrative incriminating the Ruthvens, disclose an ingenious plot, though clumsily and unskilfully carried out. And not only so, for the conspiracy did not end with the brutal proceedings of 5th August; but the cruelty that was perpetrated after that date by the King's authority; the quartering and exposing of the bodies of the two gallant young Ruthvens; the hunting to death by Royal Proclamation of the remaining brothers of the family; the capture and imprisonment for nineteen years in the Tower of London of the younger brother; and the prompt execution of Gowrie's three faithful friends who were eye-witnesses of the conspiracy—all this was a tyrannical course of conduct on the part of the King that admits of no defence.

This event is probably only surpassed in the history of Scotland by the murder of James I. in the Blackfriars' monastery. Both events were appalling, and in both the corrup-

tion and unprincipled character of the Scottish nobles stands out prominently for the edification of posterity. Much controversy has centred round the Gowrie Conspiracy, arising from the silence of the official despatches of the time, and from the suspicious nature of what has been recorded.

After a careful study of the whole question, the conclusion that we arrive at is that the so-called Gowrie Conspiracy was falsely recorded by James VI.; that his narrative is supported by *ex parte* depositions of men evidently nominated by himself, but unsupported by the testimony of a single independent witness; that the conduct of the Ruthvens, even by the King's own showing, proves that they were innocent of any intention to conspire against him; that no manifestation of enmity was shown on the occasion by Gowrie and his followers, to the King, so far as can be discovered; and that the King was himself the prime mover of the conspiracy in order to abolish the house of Ruthven, root and

branch, from the realm or kingdom of Scotland.

What, then, were the causes that led up to this extraordinary event? On this point the historical record fails us, and is conspicuous by its silence. It has been said that the King's wrath was still unsatisfied regarding the Raid of Ruthven, and though he beheaded the first Earl of Gowrie, because of it, it was his intention to root out the entire family. It has been said again that the Queen was too intimate with Alexander Ruthven, and that that was the reason which goaded the King to go the length he did. But this slander is not confirmed, and without further evidence cannot be accepted. We therefore dismiss both these reasons as being invalid and insufficient.

The cause of the conspiracy, we think, is outside of these altogether. A deliberate study of the history of the period indicates one reason only as the probable cause. The conspiracy appears to have been formed to carry out a tragedy in four acts, all of

them of an appalling nature. The first was the murder of Gowrie and his companions; the second the annihilation of the Ruthvens and the nineteen years imprisonment in the Tower of London; the third the confiscation and seizure of the Gowrie estates; the fourth the *ex parte* depositions for the protection of the murderers.

If Gowrie, as was generally believed, was grandson of James IV. and Queen Margaret—his mother being a daughter of Queen Margaret, though some writers dispute this—he was evidently a rival of James VI. to the Crown of England. James was a great-grandson in the direct line. The writer of the first paper* gives the significant quotation:—

Queen Margaret's grandson nigher in degree
Was Gowrie's ruin and King James's plea.

The reasons suggested by this writer for the conspiracy against Gowrie are:—"James's

* James Scott.

antipathy to the opulent and powerful family of Gowrie, father and son having raised rebellion against his government: the battle of Doune in 1593 headed by young Gowrie against the King: Gowrie's opposition to the tax proposed by James." None of these reasons can be accepted. The rebellion of the father had been atoned for: there is no proof of the son's rebellion: the battle of Doune was an insignificant affair, and Gowrie, who was then only a boy of fifteen years of age, could not possibly have headed it. Though Gowrie was a strong opponent of James's unreasonable demand for a heavy tax, which we have already adverted to, that could form no adequate reason for taking his life.

One reason which might induce James to commit a crime of such magnitude was his relationship to Gowrie, who, in his estimation, might be a competitor for the Crown of England. Looking to Gowrie's extensive estates, his riches and accomplishments, it

was natural that James, who could boast of none of these, felt the certainty of his being a dangerous subject and a rival to his future greatness. What gives additional weight to this is that the female members of the Ruthven family were excluded from this tragic drama. The plot was limited to the brothers, as so long as a brother was alive, so long would James have a rival to his throne.

Gowrie was a man of refined manners and with all the accomplishments that a sound education could bestow, while amongst the people he was unquestionably more popular than the King. We must keep in view these points in our review of this mysterious event, and consider how far they may be responsible for James's conduct, for it is evident that of all the men at his Court Gowrie was the only one who completely shadowed the King.

Assuming that Gowrie and his brother were the conspirators, what object had they for assassinating the King? Nothing but an

object of the most astounding nature could have induced them to take such a step. We look in vain in the national archives and elsewhere for any object whatever. The execution of Gowrie's father has been persistently put forward by some writers as a probable reason; but the father was long dead, and had sufficiently atoned for his crimes, so that that reason cannot be accepted. Did Gowrie's behaviour during his residence at Padua or after indicate any visible signs of murdering the King? There is nothing recorded to warrant such a construction of his conduct. He was, on the contrary, judging from what we know of him, probably the very last man who would be associated with such a crime. The attainder of the Ruthvens—one of the most unwarrantable acts which have appeared on the Statute-book—ought to be repealed by Parliament, and the Earldom of Gowrie restored as a recognition on the part of the Crown of the unlawful treatment of which, for 300 years, the Ruthvens have been the victims.

CHAPTER VI.

Fall of the House of Ruthven and Fate of the remaining Brothers—Proclamation of the King for their Arrest—Patrick Ruthven in the Tower—His Marriage there—His Daughter's Marriage to Vandyke—The Cowell MSS.—The Gowrie Papers, by John Bruce, F.S.A.—Letter the Earl of Gowrie to James VI.—Patrick Ruthven's Petition to Cromwell—Privy Council Resolution releasing Ruthven—Dispersion of the Gowrie Estates—Genealogy of the Ruthven Family.

WHEN all was over and the family of Ruthven, after a long and distinguished career, had fallen never to rise again, the eyes of Europe, as may be supposed, were directed to the scene of this astounding event and to the unfortunate family who were its victims. Two brothers still remained, and to them the event was one of life or death. One would have supposed that the King, having accomplished his purpose to his heart's content,

would have put his sword in its scabbard and discontinued further persecution of the family. He had had his revenge, and what more did he want? Not so, however. His conduct is simply an inexplicable mystery, for instead of resting satisfied with what he had done, he resolved to seize and imprison the two surviving brothers who were completing their education, and to all intents and purposes meant to execute them also. These young men were perfectly innocent of having done anything to offend him. They were now to be hunted to the death as cruelly as was Prince Charlie in 1745. Freebooters, spies, emissaries of all descriptions were told off as so many watch-dogs to keep a look-out all over Scotland, and especially on all the roads leading to the borders, with powers to seize the youths on the first opportunity. The King, no doubt, believed that their escape in the face of these arrangements was impossible, but he was mistaken, as the narrative will show.

During the sixteenth century the Ruthven family were among the most popular of the Scottish nobility, and especially so in the County of Perth. In proof of which from 1529 to 1600, a period of seventy-one years, the Ruthvens were Provosts of Perth for no less than sixty years. William, Lord Ruthven, who was created first Earl of Gowrie, was Provost of Perth for eighteen years. He was probably the greatest personality of the family, being a man of great force of character, cruel and unscrupulous to a degree, while his brutal nature is illustrated in his conduct at the Court of Queen Mary. The Raid of Ruthven, led by him, resulted in his execution, and the King's wrath for his conduct seems never to have subsided. Whether this had to do with the creation of the Gowrie Conspiracy is a point that cannot now be determined with certainty.

His daughters were all married to noble-men, viz., the Duke of Lennox, the Earls of Montrose, Atholl, Airlie, Wemyss and Lou-

doun, and Sir John Home. The eldest son, the second Earl of Gowrie, died young, the second son, John Ruthven, became third Earl of Gowrie, and with his brother Alexander was killed at the Gowrie Conspiracy. That event, with its dreadful consequences to the Ruthven family, caused the remaining two sons, William and Patrick, to make their escape into England. Their arrest was immediately ordered by the King by proclamation. The two young men made their escape to Berwick *incog.*, and presented themselves to Sir John Carey, the Governor. He gave them shelter until he heard from the English Queen, who allowed them to remain in England. For upwards of three weeks they lay concealed in Berwick, never stirring out of their chamber. The country was so thickly set with spies that their mother, who was living at Dirleton was unable to send them any assistance. Carey, however, gave them some help.

Carey writes that he had not seen the poor

boys, so close had they kept themselves, as they had never yet stirred out of their chamber to look abroad. Carey desired that for their greater safety they should seek a retreat farther from the Border. They were detained, however, in their hiding-place at Berwick for want of clothing and money for a journey. The result was well, for the Governor thought if they had moved they would have been trapped. "Such secret search and privy spial is there through the whole country for her and her sons as no friend either dare or can travel in their country but he is searched. And if I had sent them sooner away I should but have sent them to very great danger either of being killed or taken: for that they being very poor themselves, and having neither friends nor acquaintances, could neither have told whether to have gone nor what to do." *

They went from Berwick, with Elizabeth's consent, to Cambridge, where they remained

* Secret Correspondence of Cecil.

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two years. In 1602 they secretly visited Scotland; but penniless, homeless, and objects of continuous hatred to James. They returned to England and were there when Elizabeth died and James ascended the throne. This was a great calamity to them. James retained his feeling of hatred, and again issued a proclamation for their arrest. As this proclamation is of great importance in its bearing on the guilt or innocence of James, we reproduce it. It is entitled the proclamation of the King for the arrest of William and Patrick Ruthven, dated April 27th, 1603, and was in the following terms:—

Whereas the King's Majesty is informed that William and Patrick Ruthven, two brethren to the late Earl of Gowrie (a dangerous traitor to his person), have crept into this kingdom with malicious hearts against him, disguising themselves in secret places, where he is informed that they not only utter cankered speeches against him but are practising and contriving dangerous plots

and desperate attempts against his Royal person: for effecting whereof either by themselves or by such as they can persuade and subborn thereunto they leave no means untried. Be it, therefore, known to all men by these presents that for the speedy apprehension of these malicious and dangerous persons, William Ruthven and Patrick Ruthven aforesaid, the King's most excellent Majesty doth straitly command and charge all and singular, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, Mayors, Bayliffs, Constables, and all and every other his Highness's officers, within this his realm of England, that they and every one of them make all possible diligent search and enquiry for the said malicious persons, William and Patrick Ruthven, and to use all their best endeavours as well within all manner of liberties as without, for the discovery, apprehension, and arresting the bodies of the said William and Patrick Ruthven and being apprehended and arrested forthwith speedily and without any delay to bring them or cause them to be brought,

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under sure and safe custody, before some of his Majesty's most Honourable Privy Council, there to be proceeded with and ordered according as justice shall require, and herein not to fail as they and every one of them tender their duty unto his Highness and will answer to the contrary at their uttermost peril. And the King's most Excellent Majesty doth, moreover, straitly charge and command all and every searcher, customer, or other officer of any port within this realm and all other his Highness's subjects of what nature, quality and condition soever he or they be, to whose homes or company the said William and Patrick Ruthven or either of them shall resort, or to whose knowledge, notice and understanding it may come, where or in what places they, the said William and Patrick Ruthven, shall be or into whose hands they shall come, to stay, apprehend, and arrest them and to bring them before some of his Majesty's Privy Council as aforesaid. Wherein if any shall go about to conceal them or shall

not reveal their abode, if it be in their power to do so, his Majesty doth hereby pronounce, that he will for ever after hold them as partakers and abettors of these malicious intentions for which they shall feel the weight of his heaviest indignation. And if, at any time, any subjects of his out of their duty shall discover the persons aforesaid or their residence, and yet shall not find themselves able to pursue them, his Majesty doth command them to call for the aid and assistance of his Highness's officers or any others his subjects, whom his Majesty also hereby straitly chargeth and commandeth to be aiding and assisting herein as they will answer to the contrary at their uttermost peril. Given at Burghley the 27th April, 1603, in the first year of our reign.

William Ruthven made his escape, but Patrick was arrested under this proclamation and put in the Tower of London. This unfortunate young man lay in the Tower for nineteen years, or until he was thirty-eight

years of age. In 1616, a grant of £200 per annum was made to him by the authorities. It is supposed that at this date his brother William was dead, as nothing more was heard of him, and that Patrick would now be the head of the Gowrie family, which would give him a claim for compassionate consideration at the hands of the King. In 1622, he was ordered by the King to be removed to Cambridge, and awarded a pension of £500 per annum out of the Exchequer. In 1624, he was released absolutely but was not allowed to live near the Court, and he fixed his domicile in Somersetshire. Very little is known of him for at least sixteen years, when in the reign of Charles I., in 1640, he was resident in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields: and there is an entry of his assigning £120 per annum to his daughter Mary Ruthven. The document authorising this annuity to his daughter has been preserved. It appears to have been granted in the fifteenth year of the reign of Charles I. and is in the following terms:—

“I, Patrick Ruthven, of the parish of St. Martin’s-in-the-Fields, in the County of Middlesex, have made, assigned, ordained, constituted and appointed my living daughter, Mary Ruthven, spinster, my true and lawful attorney and assignee for me and in my name, but to the only proper use and behoof of my said attorney to ask, demand, and receive at the receipt of his Majesty’s Exchequer, of his Highness’s officers and ministers there for the time being yearly and every year during my natural life the sum of £120 out of my yearly pension of £500 payable to me out of his Majesty’s Exchequer. And for so doing these presents together with the handwriting of my said daughter, shall unto all and every of his Majesty’s officers and ministers be a sufficient warrant and discharge. In witness whereof I, Patrick Ruthven, have hereunto set my hand and seal the seven and twentieth day of February, Anno Domini, 1639, in the fifteenth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord, Charles by the

grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c."

PATRICK RUTHVEN.

The following is the minute of the Privy Council, dated February 4th, 1623-4, releasing Ruthven:—

Whereas His Majesty was graciously pleased to give orders for the enlargement of Patrick Ruthven from his imprisonment within the Tower of London and that he should remain confined to the University of Cambridge and within six miles of the same until the further order from his Majesty, his royal pleasure was this day further signified by Mr. Secretary Conway that the said Patrick Ruthven, according to his humble suit to his Majesty, should be released of his confinement on these two conditions, viz., that he should come no nearer to the Court than he was permitted by his said confinement: and that he should not at any time seat himself in any

place where his Majesty should not like him to be resident, whereupon the said Patrick Ruthven having for the present named Somersetshire for his residence his Majesty was pleased to approve thereof: and a memorial hereof was commanded to be entered in the Register of Council Causes and a copy of the same sent to the said Patrick Ruthven.

It has been discovered that Patrick Ruthven married Elizabeth Woodford, widow of the first Lord Gerrard of Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire. It is supposed that this marriage took place a year or two after the death of Lord Gerrard and whilst Ruthven was still suffering imprisonment. In 1624 the lady died, leaving Ruthven a widower with two boys and a girl, and to add to his calamity the financial troubles of the Government put an end to his pension and consequently that of his daughter. His daughter Mary was admitted to the Royal Household in the service of Queen Henrietta Maria, and is said

to have been a young lady of extraordinary beauty. The famous painter, Vandyke, fell in love with her and married her. In 1640 she and her husband visited his native city, Flanders, where she gave birth to her only child, a daughter named Justiniana. In the following year Vandyke died, to the great grief of his devoted young wife. It would appear that some years after she married Sir Richard Pryse, which is stated to have been an imprudent marriage, and she shortly thereafter died. All that was left for her child, Justiniana, was Vandyke's finished and unfinished pictures, and these appear to have been taken possession of by lawyers and eventually were smuggled out of the country to be sold. Ruthven applied to the Lords of Parliament for an injunction and got it, but somehow in spite of that the pictures were taken away and Vandyke's child was left in poverty. Justiniana was born in 1641 and was married to Sir John Pendergast.

The writer who gives these particulars, says * :—

“The gradations of poverty and misery which Ruthven passed through it is now impossible to unravel. Probably he lived to look back on the long years he had passed in the Tower, passed in the pursuits of favourite studies, as the happiest portion of his life. When death came to him at the age of sixty-eight it found this inheritor and representative of some of the noblest blood in Scotland, this cousin of the King and a possible claimant of the throne, the tenant of a cell in the King’s Bench. He was buried at St. George’s, in Southwark, as Lord Ruthven, on the 24th May, 1652. On the 13th March, 1657, letters of administration were granted of his effects by the title of Patrick Lord Ruthven, late of Scotland, to his son Patrick Ruthven, Esquire, of whom nothing is known.”

And so the curtain falls, and the noble

* JOHN BRUCE—Stepney Cowell Papers.

house of Ruthven is numbered with the past. For centuries prior to the Conspiracy it had a remarkable career. It was a family of great opulence, popularity and high position in the realm. Like others of the great ruling families its members were good, bad and indifferent, but they were certainly not wanting in that force and decision of character which, generation after generation, brought them to the front. After the Conspiracy the chequered career of the survivors of the family is very pitiable and must arouse compassion and sympathy from every one who peruses the narrative. There is no reason to doubt the record in Col. Cowell's collection. We do not know that anything could be more pathetic or more involved in melancholy interest. The story reads like fiction but unfortunately it is true. It is specially a Perthshire story, and one that for all time will continue to be bound up with the history and traditions of that historical county.

The same writer adds: "In my town

residence at St. George's Place, Hyde Park Corner, there is in a library a small bookcase, the doors of which were formerly window shutters in an upper room of Ruthven Castle, near Perth. After James VI. and his courtiers had put to death John, the last Earl of Gowrie, with his brother, Alexander Ruthven, he attainted the blood, confiscated the property, and prohibited even the use of the name of this family. Further, his Majesty was graciously pleased to change even the name of the family abode from Ruthven Castle to Huntingtower. The shutters were presented to me by the occupier of the old castle as a reminiscence of the families of the Gowries, Ruthvens, Hallyburtons and Lords of Dirleton. The arms of the Hallyburtons who intermarried with the Ruthvens are on the shutters.

“At so distant a date, and in so rude a state of society as that of Scotland in the 16th century, it would be difficult to trace or attribute correct motives to the actors in this

affair. The actions themselves, as far as they have been permitted to come down to us, are no doubt historically true. The King, accompanied by his followers, did of his own free will and accord go to Gowrie House in Perth. His Majesty's unprepared host and entertainer was put to death by the hands of the King's followers and at the King's instigation. A *melée* ensued, arising either from false alarm or premeditated intention of some of the parties engaged. The result was the uprooting and complete destruction of a very ancient and historical family. The innocent as well as the guilty, if any such were among the Ruthvens, suffered alike and equally fell under the royal ban. These then are the facts as far as they have reached us, although great care was taken in suppressing any version of the story beyond the King's own; in spite of which even the royal version at the time was disbelieved.*

“Without therefore attributing motives or

* John Bruce.

preconceived guilt to either party, his Majesty at all events thought it perfectly necessary to give to the public some excuse from himself for the slaughter of this family enacted in their own house when he spontaneously paid a visit to Gowrie. This mysterious story never has been satisfactorily accounted for or cleared up, and probably never will be. It is fair, therefore, to offer whatever I may know or believe of this vexed question, but leave the convictions or impressions or the motives of the actors to be formed by those who may take the trouble to read a family detail as connected with a historical event. It is unquestionably a very curious subject of discussion, and especially so is the difficulty of reconciling the facts really known with any of the theories which have been invented 'to account for them.' *

There are comparatively few letters to be found of John, third Earl of Gowrie, who perished at the conspiracy, but the following

* Stepney Cowell Papers, edited by JOHN BRUCE.

one, addressed by him to James VI., gives us an indication of the friendly feelings he entertained to that monarch:—

JOHN, EARL OF GOWRIE, TO KING
JAMES VI.,—

“Please your Majesty, if the bestowing of great benefits should move the receivers thereof to be thankful to the givers, I have many and extraordinary occasions to be thankful to your Majesty: not only being favoured with the benefit of your Majesty’s esteem at all times, but also that it hath pleased your Majesty to think so well of me as to honour me with your most loving letter, which signifies your Majesty’s good favour and graciousness towards me which I esteem so much that I would think myself very happy if it should please your Majesty to command me in anything so that you might have a trial of my prompt and faithful obedience. Your Majesty’s worth and valour

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in the particular courtesies shown to me merit whatever I am able to do, and a hundred times more. I pray your Majesty to have me excused if I have taken the liberty to write again. Not having the pleasure of your Majesty's presence, I could not declare my willing mind better than by using the next alternative. In the meantime I shall rely on your Majesty's constant goodwill which God of his mercy grant that I see your Majesty always in such good estate, as I wish, which will give me the greatest satisfaction of all.

"So craving earnestly of that Creator of all things to bless you with all felicity and satisfaction in health and with an increase of many prosperous days, I devoutly kiss your Majesty's hands, etc.

-
"GOWRIE."

PADUA, *November 24, 1595.*

A narrative of the Ruthven family after the Conspiracy would be incomplete without a copy of the remarkable petition presented,

as it is recorded, by "Patrick Ruthven and Sarah his wife," to Oliver Cromwell, the Protector :—

To His Highness, Oliver, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the humble Petition of Patrick, Lord Ruthven, and Dame Sarah his wife, Sheweth—

That the petitioner is nephew to John, Earl of Gowrie, whose life, honour, and estate were sacrificed to the Court pretence of a conspiracy, and that in pursuance of that oppression the petitioner's father suffered nineteen years' imprisonment in the Tower of London till the late King was pleased to endow him with £500 per annum out of the Exchequer. The Parliament of Scotland of 1641 restored him to the Barony of Ruthven. Which pension, notwithstanding it was the whole provision the petitioner's father had for the support of his family, yet the distractions of these times obstructed its due payment and involved him in inevitable debts which cast

him into prison where he died, leaving the petitioner and another son in a very poor and lamentable condition. Your petitioner has never done anything to the prejudice of your Highness's interest, and there being nearly £5,000 due for arrears to the petitioner's father as by the certificate of the Auditor and Receiver General of the Exchequer, and by reason of your petitioner's extreme poverty he might have long since perished had he not been relieved by his wife who is not able longer to contribute.

Your petitioners most humbly beg your Highness's commiseration of their most sad condition and that your Highness would be pleased if not to restore him to his family's former splendour yet to such a position as may not altogether misbecome the quality of a gentleman: honour with beggary being an unsupportable affliction: and the petitioners as

in duty bound will ever pray,—
RUTHVEN.

We refer this petition to our counsel
desiring a tender and speedy
consideration thereof may be had.

OLIVER P.

WHITEHALL,

November 3, 1656.

[This was Patrick Ruthven, Jun., brother of Lady
Vandyke.]

THE GOWRIE ESTATES.

Abstract of the Deed of Surrender, 1583,
by William, first Earl of Gowrie, in favour
of his son.

This deed was executed after the Raid of
Ruthven, for which this Wm. Ruthven was
afterwards beheaded. The object of repro-
ducing it is to show the extent of the lands
and estates held by the family: "William
Earl of Gowrie, &c., surrenders the lands and

barony of Ruthven with the tower, fortalice, manor, salmon fisheries, &c., with the advowson and donation of the Chapels of Ruthven and Tibbermore; the lands of Ballinbreich, Pitcairn, Craigengelt; a third part of the lands of Airleywight; the town and lands of Cultrany; the lands of Dengreen; a moiety of the mill of Auchtergaven; the lands of Moneydie, Balmblair, Craigilmy; a third part of the lands and barony of Baledgarno with the castle and fortalice; a third part of the lands and barony of Abernyte; a third part of the lands and barony of Forgandenny with the advowson and donation of the chapel; a third part of the lands of Seggie in Kinross; all the lands and barony of Balerno and Newton; the town and lands of Cousland in the sheriffdom of Edinburgh; a third part of the lands and barony of Dirleton with the tower, fortalice, manor, &c., and the villa and lands of Dirleton; a third part of the lands of Bolton with the mills and fisheries (salt and freshwater); a third part of the lands of

Hassindean and Halyburton with the donation of the chapel of Halyburton all within the sherifffdom of Berwick. These were surrendered to James VI. to be annexed and incorporated with one whole and free barony to be called the barony of Ruthven, in favour of James Ruthven, his eldest son and heir apparent, reserving however to himself and Dorothy Stewart, his wife, a life interest in the same." This document was signed at Perth on the last day of February, 1583, seventeen years before the Gowrie Conspiracy.

GENEALOGY OF THE RUTHVEN FAMILY.

In the twelfth century, Allan, the son of Walter, married Cecilia, daughter of Gilbert, Earl of Strathearn, with whom he got the lands of Cowgask. His son was Walter de Ruthven. This name he assumed from the lands of his old inheritance called Ruthven. In the reign of James III., Sir William Ruthven, son of another Sir William, presum-

ably descended from Walter, was created Lord Ruthven. His first wife was Isobel, daughter of Lord Livingstone, by whom he had a son and heir who was killed at Flodden before his father died. Lord Ruthven had a second wife, Christian, daughter of Sir John Forbes of Pitsligo, and by her he had a son, afterwards Sir William Ruthven of Bandirran, and two daughters, one of whom married the Earl of Buchan and the other the Earl of Errol. Lord Ruthven by his first wife had a second son called William, second Lord Ruthven, who married Janet, daughter of Patrick Halyburton, Lord Dirleton, and succeeded his father as Lord Ruthven. He was Lord Privy Seal, and died in 1556, leaving issue Patrick, his successor, and Alexander, a second son, who was the first of the Ruthvens of Freeland, afterwards created Lord Ruthven by Charles II. William, the second Lord Ruthven, had several daughters, one of whom married David, Lord Drummond, Earl of Perth, and his eldest son was Patrick, Lord Ruthven, one of the

murderers of Riccio, who died in banishment at Alnwick for that crime (1566). He was married to Jean, daughter of the Earl of Angus, and left two sons and two daughters. His eldest son was William, first Earl of Gowrie. Gowrie married Dorothea Stuart, a daughter of Lord Methven by his second wife, Janet, daughter of the Earl of Atholl, which Lord Methven was first married to Queen Margaret, widow of James IV. She died in 1541. Dorothea Stuart was the mother of Gowrie and Alexander Ruthven of the conspiracy.* According to this authority, Queen Margaret had no child to the King but James V. Thereafter she married the Earl of Angus, to whom she bore one child, who afterwards was Lady Margaret Lennox, mother of Darnley. Afterwards Queen Margaret divorced Angus and married Lord Methven.

Gowrie's mother, Dorothea Stuart, could not have been the Queen's daughter, for her

* Earl of Cromartie.

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Majesty died in 1541, aged 53, whereas Dorothea Stuart, first and only Countess of Gowrie, had borne children at intervals after 1580. A son whom Margaret bore when Dowager, although omitted by all our Peerage critics, is expressly mentioned in Lord Methven's patent of creation, 1525, as uterine brother of the Royal donor James V., and by two credible and nearly contemporary authors, Bishops Lesley and Hume, formerly stated to have been slain at Pinkie in 1547. The Master of Methven, as these designate him, must have been son of the Queen, because no son by Methven's second wife could have been old enough to appear in arms. Her Majesty's second son, according to the first Viscount Strathallan, had been born in 1515 or the following year, consequently must at his death have been over 30 years of age. That he was father of the Countess of Gowrie is stated by Lord Strathallan. Who the Countess's mother was does not appear.*

* James Scott, Ant. Lib.

APPENDIX.

GOWRIE HOUSE.

It is difficult to convey to the reader an intelligible idea of the general appearance and beautiful proportions of this famous building, which was in its day considered the greatest ornament of the town of Perth. It would appear from the best reports that the building extended from the Water Vennel to Canal Street, bounded on the west by the Speygate and on the east by the river. The entrance was from South Street by an arched and very chaste gateway. The gable stood a little to the north of the gate of the County Prison. This wing consisted of a range of lofty stone buildings, the lower part being fire-proof and bomb-proof. The second storey consisted of two large State or reception

rooms; the upper floor divided in the same manner. The northern division consisted of buildings not so lofty, having only one flat above the fire-proof and another flat above that. In the west division was the kitchen and *cuisine*, with a fireplace extending across the whole length of the house. This division, north of the main entrance and forming part of the Watergate, contained spacious public rooms on each flat. On the east of the building a terrace ran along the river the whole length of the property. At the end of this terrace was an oval tower, the interior of which was ornamented with drawings of the arms of the Scottish nobility. This tower was built in the angle of the eastern and southern walls and was called the Spy tower from its commanding situation and extensive view. The apartments of Gowrie House were numerous and arranged *en suite* so as to communicate with each other. There was a gallery which extended along one side of the square and communicated by a door at the end with a chamber which led to a small circular room in the turret (where the conspiracy occurred). This gallery and the other

apartments were accessible by a broad oaken staircase called the "black turnpike," but the turret or round room could be reached also by a back spiral stair, so that persons who entered it through the gallery might escape or could be conveyed away without again using the principal staircase. On the south, to the line of Canal Street, was the garden, the city wall forming the western and southern enclosure. Where the wall met the river was the Monks' tower. This tower was part of the range of buildings. The house was elaborately decorated with astronomical representations and with paintings and works of art. On the outside of the Spy tower was a dock or basin formed on the side of the bed of the lade that runs into the river below Canal Street.

During Gowrie's occupation of the house the locality was the fashionable part of the town. Several noblemen lived in the Watergate and Speygate. The Earl of Atholl had a house on the west side of Speygate, nearly opposite Gowrie House: the Earl of Errol had one at the west end of Watergate, and adjoining it was the Bishop of Dunkeld's house:

Lord Chancellor Hay lived at the south end of Watergate adjoining Gowrie House: Lord Crichton of Sanquhar in the Speygate, while Lord John Murray's house was in Curfew Street, north of the Fair Maid's house. All these houses, with one exception, have now disappeared, as also the Parliament House, which was situated on the north side of High Street. Provost Murray's house in the Watergate still stands, a most substantially built house of curious internal construction with walls three feet thick. It is situated next the Perthshire Advertiser printing office. At the Gowrie Conspiracy other residents in Watergate were Lady Stewart of Urrard, Murray of Dollerie, Provost Caw, Provost Alison, and Dr. Wood.

Gowrie House was originally erected by Elizabeth Gray, Countess of Huntly, in 1520. She was a daughter of Andrew, Lord Gray, and was born in 1455. In 1525 she founded masses for her husband in Blackfriars' Monastery and died in 1526. After her death the house was acquired by Patrick, Lord Ruthven, who died in 1566 (father of the first Earl of Gowrie). Alexander, Earl of Huntly, and

Lord of Badenoch, died in 1524. He was buried in the choir of the Church of the Blackfriars at Perth. He was at one time proprietor of the Castle of Ruthven. On January 24th, 1525, a charter was granted by Elizabeth to the Prior and Friars of the Blackfriars' Monastery, giving them the Estate of Littleton in order that mass might be said daily for her own soul and that of her husband. The illustration we have given of Gowrie House will afford the reader some idea of its graceful architecture and fine proportions. At the Gowrie Conspiracy it was forfeited and became the property of the City. In 1746 the town of Perth presented it to the Duke of Cumberland in recognition of his services against the Jacobites at Culloden. The Duke afterwards sold it to the Government to be converted into Artillery Barracks, and it was so occupied till the French war of 1789. In 1805 it was purchased from the Government by the City—or rather an excambion took place—the City giving them in exchange a site to build a depot for prisoners of war, viz., five acres of the Moncrieff lands for which the City was to pay the price fixed

by a jury. It was afterwards sold to the County. A Vennel, called the Provost of Methven's Vennel, led to the Tay from the east end of South Street (but in Speygate). In 1580 the Town gave the Vennel to the Earl of Gowrie, as it lay at the south end of his property in Speygate, which he was to shut up in exchange for a new Vennel from the Watergate to the Tay called the Water Vennel. This Vennel is situated between the United Free West Church and Mr. Cowan's property in Tay Street.

Regarding the two towers on the Gowrie House buildings, the Monks' tower and the Spey or Spy tower, the former was erected, as already stated, on the south-east corner of these buildings on the town wall facing the river. In this tower, when the monks were disorderly, they were sometimes confined in order to do penance. It was occasionally used as a powder magazine. The Spey or Spy Tower was a strong and stately fortress, the under part of which was long used as a prison. The Rosses of Craigie were governors of it. At the Reformation Robert Ross of Craigie delivered up the keys under protest.

The tower stood near Gowrie House in line with the town wall, and was also one of the fortresses. It was here that Cardinal Beaton imprisoned those who were condemned to death for opposing Popery, and from here he witnessed their execution. In addition to these prisons there was the Tolbooth for common prisoners or criminals.

Gowrie House has now disappeared and on its site stand the County Buildings of the County of Perth.



THE ANCIENT OR MERCAT CROSS OF PERTH, WHICH IS
ASSOCIATED WITH THE GOWRIE CONSPIRACY.

RUTHVEN CASTLE, PERTH.

Painted on the chimney-piece of Ruthven Castle are the following significant words:—

*Vera diu latitant, sed longo temporis usu
Emergunt tandem quae latuere diu.*

Truth long lies hid, but in time's long (delayed) opportunity
At length come to light the things that have long been
concealed.

Mercer Chronicle.

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